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# THE Penitent Pardon'd: OR, A DISCOURSE OF THE *Nature of SIN*, AND THE *Efficacy of REPENTANCE*, Under the PARABLE OF THE Prodigal Son.

By *J. GOODMAN*, D. D. Chaplain in Ordinary to His MAJESTY.

The Fifth Edition Corrected and Enlarged.

Ἀναπτύξωμεν πᾶσαν τὴν περὶ τοῦ Ἀσώτου παραβολὴν, ἵνα μάθωμεν ἐξ αὐτῆς πῶς δεῖ προσπελάζειν τῷ ἀπροσπελάστῳ. S. Chrysost.

*LONDON*,
Printed by *W. Horton*, for L. Meredith, at the *Star* in St. *Paul's-Church-Yard*, MDCC.

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TO THE

# Right Honourable

# ARTHUR

## *EARL* of *ESSEX*,

VISCOUNT *Malden*, BARON of *Hadham*, LORD LIEUTENANT of the County of *Hartford*, One of the LORDS of His MAJESTY's Moſt Honourable Privy-Council, *&c.*

*My LORD*,

I Have ſo deep a ſenſe of thoſe manifold and great Favours which through the courſe of many years without interruption it hath pleaſed your Lordſhip to confer upon me, That though I know it is impoſſible for me to make any proportionable return, yet it is equally impoſſible for me to omit

any opportunity of making my juſt acknowledgments. And foraſmuch as my obligations to your Lordſhip are as well known to the World as great in themſelves, I think it becomes me, and am perſuaded all men (but your Lordſhip) expect it from me, that I ſhould make ſome publick expreſſion of my gratitude,

I will therefore do that right to my ſelf to acknowlege, that when I firſt deliberated about the adventuring theſe Papers to the Preſs, it was a principal argument to determine me ſo to do, becauſe by the Dedication of this part of my Studies to your Lordſhip's Name, I ſhould have opportunity of performing ſo juſt a duty, and of doing honour to ſo great Vertue and Goodneſs.

But, My Lord, I muſt needs confeſs, that when I came to make reflection upon the Subject, and the tenour of the preſent Diſcourſe, I was quickly ſenſible how great an errour my zeal was likely to betray me into, in Intitling a work almoſt wholly levelled againſt Debauchery, to a Perſonage of ſo ſevere Vertue and Sanctity; for I conſidered your Lordſhip's early, as well as eminent and habitual Piety, and what need (thought I) is there of Phyſick to thoſe that are in perfect health? and if as S. *Paul* aſ-

ſerts,

ſerts, *The Law is not made for a Righteous man*, becauſe ſuch are able to be a Law to themſelves; much leſs is the Doctrine of Repentance ſuitably Preached to thoſe that (in the words of our Saviour) *need no Repentance:* Thus I felt a conflict within my ſelf, my diſcretion oppoſing the deſigns of my gratitude, and my preſent reaſon ſtaggering my former reſolution.

But then, my Lord, I conſidered alſo on the other hand, that ſeeing the Divine Majeſty himſelf is well pleaſed with thoſe Oblations that are beneficial to the World, though they are not uſeful to himſelf, nor make any addition to his own glory and happineſs; I could not doubt but your Lordſhip who hath ſo great a zeal to the common good of mankind, would permit your Name to be made uſe of to countenance a deſign of bringing men home to God, to themſelves, and their own happineſs; and of recovering the Age from the miſchiefs of extravagancy and debauchery, which it too lamentably groans under.

And this, My Lord, refixed my reſolutions to Intitle your Lordſhip to this plain Piece of Practical Divinity; and ſo much the rather, becauſe it is reaſonable to hope, that the directing Men's eyes

and thoughts to ſo great and rare an Example of clear and unſpotted Vertue, amidſt all the diſturbances of buſineſs, and the temptations of a plentiful fortune, will be able to confute all their objections againſt the poſſibility of heroick goodneſs; and may have as much efficacy to convince and ſhame them out of their follies, as the very Reaſon of this Diſcourſe to incourage their amendment.

And ſhould I now, as well in purſuance of the deſign of my Book, as of my gratitude, make a draught of your Lordſhip in your full proportions; that is, endeavour to repreſent you as great as your own Vertues added to the Nobility of your Blood have made you, I might (if my skill failed me not) exhibit to the World a piece of that Maſculine perfection wherein the moſt curious would not know what to deſire, nor the moſt envious what to ſuſpect. Foraſmuch as not only this whole Kingdom, and that of *Ireland*, but ſeveral of the Neighbour States and Kingdoms alſo, can bear witneſs to your Lordſhip's ſteadineſs in the Proteſtant Religion: your Loyalty to your Prince, your Piety, Humanity, Juſtice, Temperance, Prudence, Courage, and all other great and Illuſtrious Ornaments.

Nor

Nor do I fear by ſuch a Character to derive any envy upon your Lordſhip, ſince very few of your Laurels were the meer Favours of Fortune, but the Rewards of Vertue, the Acqueſts of Prudence and Conduct, and won by Wiſe Counſels, by Generous Reſolutions, and Noble Employments; and in ſuch a caſe it is to be hoped that Men will not have the Impudence to Envy the Effects, when they have not the Bravery to imitate the Cauſes.

Thus, my Lord, I could ſatisfie my own Conſcience and do right to the World, in ſetting before them ſuch a Pattern as would at once inflame the Generous, and ſhame the ſlothful and Vicious. But I know your Lordſhip's Temper, and the Greatneſs of your Mind too well to think, that hereby I ſhould do an Acceptable Service to your Lordſhip; wherefore I add no more but my Hearty Prayers, that it will pleaſe Almighty God to Bleſs your Lordſhip, and your moſt Noble and Pious Counteſs with long Life and Proſperity, to ſucceed your Lordſhip's Studies and Endeavours, to the benefit of Religion, your Prince and Countrey, and to preſerve your hopeful Off-ſpring, that they may Uphold your Family, Name and Honour

to

to after Generations. This, my Lord, is the Constant Duty, and shall be the Incessant Desire of,

My Lord,

*Your Lordship's*

*Most Humble Servant,*

JO. GOODMAN.

*Octob.* 1. 1678.

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THE

# THE PREFACE TO THE READER.

*IT is not unlikely that theſe Papers may a little ſurprize ſome of thoſe into whoſe hands they may fall. Not ſo much in regard that this Subject hath been handled by others, for I modeſtly hope, that notwithſtanding any thing I have ſeen or heard of from other Pens, this Diſcourſe may have its place and uſe; but becauſe I am aware that ſome of my Friends who have been privy to my Intentions, and to the courſe of my Studies, have made me a debtor to the Publick of a Work of a different nature from this which I now preſent. And I am not unwilling ſo far to own the Obligation, as to acknowledge that I have now for a good time applied my thoughts to the Diſcovery and Explication of the Nature and Reaſon of Religion in general; and I do hope, if it pleaſe God to continue me life and health, that in due time I ſhall in ſome good meaſure acquit the credit*

*credit of my Friends in that point, and ſatisfie the expectation of ſober men.*

*But becauſe a Work of that nature and importance requires the moſt mature deliberation, and exacteſt diſcuſſion; And becauſe I willingly confeſs my ſelf to be none of thoſe who are as wiſe at the firſt proſpect of a buſineſs, as ever they intend to be; and who, as if they had an intuitive knowledge, preſently jump into an Infallibility of Opinion, which they can never after find in their hearts to retract or outgrow: I therefore think it both fitteſt and ſafeſt that a Work of that nature ſhould be digeſted by ſeveral reflections upon it, and ripened by time,* which certainly is the beſt Counſeller in the World. *Upon this account, kind Reader, it comes to paſs, that inſtead of a more cloſe and ſpeculative, this plain and practical Diſcourſe is now put into thy hand, and recommended to thy candor; which notwithſtanding, if all things be duly conſider'd, is not altogether ſo remote from the deſign of the other, as may at firſt glimpſe be imagined.*

*For it is very conſiderable, that the Apoſtle S.* Paul, Gal. 5. 20. *reckons* hereſies *amongſt the* works of the fleſh, *as if the exorbitancy of mens Opinions were occaſioned by the irregularity and violence of their paſſions, and the ſentiments of mens minds depraved and byaſſed by the corrupt inclinations of the animal powers.*

*And*

*And if we obſerve the World, we ſhall find not only very witty men to be oftentimes moſt abſurdly and barbarouſly vicious, but which is more ſtrange, we ſhall ſee very bad men of very good Opinions; and on the contrary, very good and vertuous perſons under moſt ſilly and deſpicable perſuaſions. By which it plainly appears, that reaſon and the right notion of things do not ſo much govern the World, as either natural probity, or a θεία μοῖρα in the laſt mentioned caſe; or elſe intereſt and humour in the other.*

*From whence it comes to paſs, that as the* Platoniſts *ſaid,* Ὅπῃ τὸ σύμφερον, ἐκεῖ καὶ τὸ εὐσεβές. One may calculate what religious pretenſions moſt men will be of, from the contemplation of their temper or intereſts.

*For ſo we ſhall ſee a ſwaggering Hector become an eaſie Proſelyte to the* Hobbian *Philoſophy; a licentious Voluptuary preſently commences an* Epicurean *Atheiſt; and an undevout temper ſets up for a Theiſt; or ſomething worſe.*

*Upon conſideration of all which, I am of Opinion that the moſt ſucceſsful way of recovering the generality of men to right notions of Religion, and putting them under the power of them, is to imitate Phyſicians, who when the Head is ill affected, apply not immediately to that (which tho' it be the principal part,*

*part, is ſeldom primarily affected) but to the* Stomach, *or* Hypocondria, *or ſome other inferiour faculty which influence upon it, and make it bear a ſhare of the conſequences of their reſpective diſorders.*

*Agreeably whereunto I have endeavoured in this Treatiſe to ſtrike at Debauchery, as at the Root of moſt of the calamities of Religion; and which doth not more deform mens lives, than diſtort their reaſon; and either ſtifle or pervert the very principles of their Mind and Conſcience. And though I will not be guilty of Libelling the Age we live in, by ripping up the diſorders thereof, thereby to raiſe the value of this ſmall performance; yet I am certain of theſe two things, that I have both deſigned publick good in this undertaking, and not varied from the ſubſtance of that which I have told thee was my firſt projection.*

*But diſmiſſing all further conſiderations of that kind, as for the preſent diſcourſe, I have neither ſuch a fondneſs to my own production, nor am ſo much a ſtranger either to the humours of men, or the condition of the Times, but that I think it had been much eaſier to have gratified the curioſity of both, ſome other way: Notwithſtanding, ſince it is apparent that there is now-a-days more light than heat, and leſs ſeriouſneſs than either; and conſequently more need that the principles of Conſcience ſhould be ſtirred up than any notion ſtarted,*

ſtarted, or controverſy moved: I am therefore apt to hope this Labour will not ſeem unſeaſonable; or however, I am well content to be one of thoſe that had rather ſave one Soul than pleaſe ten thouſand.

I know there is nothing ſo ſerious but may be expoſed to Drollery by Atheiſtical Wits, who have had the impudence not to ſpare the ſacred Scripture it ſelf: And I know the World is never free from a ſort of idle invidious perſons, who finding it a far eaſier matter to find faults than to mend, carp at every thing that is made publick under this only ſecurity, that by reaſon of their own unprofitableneſs and ſloth, no body can find any thing of theirs wherein to pay them in their own coin.

Neither of theſe ſorts of men will I trouble my ſelf about, and as for wiſe men I know they will ſee many imperfections in this Book, but they will alſo pardon them; eſpecially conſidering that no man can think or write in all things juſt to the guſt of another, but only thoſe that have mercenary Pens, and paraſitical proſtituted Conſciences.

It may be, ſome of thoſe whom I deſign to profit by this Diſcourſe, will think they obſerve ſome very neceſſary things omitted, or but ſlightly touched upon; ſuch as eſpecially concerning faith in Chriſt Jeſus, &c. To which my anſwer is, that I would as gladly, and as copiouſly have diſcourſed on that Point as any other,

*other, had either the nature of my Deſign, or indeed the ſeries of the Parable led me thereto.*

*Upon the whole matter I have endeavoured to do good to as many as I could and to give offence to none; neither to the* Jew *nor to the* Greek, *nor to the Church of God: If any thing ſeem obſcure in any one part of this Book, I am perſuaded that he that reads on ſhall find it cleared up in ſome other place. But if any thing be unadviſedly delivered (which God forbid) that is, either not agreeable to the Doctrine of the Church of* England, *or to the ſenſe of wiſe and good Men, I wiſh it unſaid, and hereby retract it under my Hand.*

THE

THE

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THE

# THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON.

## S. *LUKE*, CHAP. XV.

Verſ. 11. *A Certain man had two Sons:*

12. *And the Younger of them ſaid to his Father, Father give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living.*

13. *And not many days after, the Younger Son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far Country, and there waſted his ſubſtance with riotous living.*

14. *And when he had ſpent all, there aroſe a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.*

15. *And he went and joyned himſelf to a Citizen of that Country; and he ſent him into his fields to feed Swine.*

16. *And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the Swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.*

17. *And when he came to himſelf, he ſaid, How many hired ſervants of my Father have Bread enough and to ſpare, and I periſh with hunger?*

18. *I will ariſe and go to my Father, and will ſay unto him, Father I have ſinned againſt heaven and before thee,*

19. *And am no more worthy to be called thy Son: make me as one of thy hired ſervants.*

20. *And he aroſe, and came to his Father. But when he was yet a great way off, his Father ſaw him, and had compaſſion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kiſſed him.*

21. *And*

21. *And the Son ſaid unto him, Father, I have ſinned againſt Heaven, and in thy ſight, and am no more worthy to be called thy Son.*

22. *But the Father ſaid to his ſervants, Bring forth the beſt Robe, and put it on him, and put a Ring on his hand, and Shoes on his feet.*

23. *And bring hither the fatted Calf, and kill it; and let us eat and be merry.*

24. *For this my Son was dead, and is alive again; he was loſt, and is found. And they began to be merry.*

25. *Now his Elder Son was in the field: and as he came, and drew nigh to the houſe, he heard muſick and dancing.*

26. *And he called one of the ſervants, and asked what theſe things meant.*

27. *And he ſaid unto him, Thy Brother is come; and thy Father hath killed the fatted Calf, becauſe he hath received him ſafe and ſound.*

28. *And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his Father out, and intreated him.*

29. *And he anſwering, ſaid to his Father, Lo, theſe many years do I ſerve thee, neither tranſgreſſed I at any time thy commandment, and yet thou never gaveſt me a Kid, that I might make merry with my Friends:*

33. *But as ſoon as this thy Son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou haſt killed for him the fatted Calf.*

31. *And he ſaid unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.*

32. *It was meet that we ſhould make merry, and be glad: for this thy Brother was dead, and is alive again; and was loſt, and is found.*

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THE

# THE *Penitent Pardoned:* OR, A DISCOURSE OF THE NATURE of SIN, AND THE EFFICACY of REPENTANCE Under the Parable *of the* Prodigal Son.

## PART I.

### CHAP. I.

The peculiar Excellency of this Parable of our Saviour; and touching Parables in general.

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§. I. I Verily perſwade my ſelf that there is no intelligent perſon who ſhall happen to read the paſſage of Holy Scripture now before us, but will preſently, and at the firſt proſpect of it, take notice of a very beautiful and affecting ſcene of things repreſented to him: wherein it will be very hard for him to determine, whether the variety of matter, juſt proportions of the particulars, or decent and natural order of things, do more vie with each other, or more equally conſpire to fill his imagination, and affect his heart. For in the very letter of this Parable he will ſee deſcribed, firſt, the Benignity, Indulgence and Condeſcenſion of a Father to his Son, together with the Folly and Licentiouſneſs of Youth; then the gradual progreſs and ſad cataſtrophe of a courſe of debauchery; after this the uſual miſgivings of heart and change of mind upon ſuch change of affairs, the ſerious reflections upon, and late repentance of ſuch follies: Then again a deſcription of Parental affections; the exorableneſs of a Father upon his Son's ſubmiſſion; the profuſeneſs of his kindneſs upon his reformation; and, laſtly, the tranſports of his joy upon his plenary recovery. And indeed the moſt powerfull

erfull paſſions of humane nature are here drawn with that admirable skill as to equal the very life it ſelf.

It was not therefore pronounced at adventure by the Learned *Hugo Grotius*, but agreeably to his uſual ſagacity, when he ſaid, *This Parable of the Prodigal Son is the moſt remarkable of all thoſe which were delivered by our Saviour, as being the moſt paſſionate and affecting, ſet out and adorned with the moſt lively colours, and beautifull ſimilitudes.* All which is diſcernible upon the moſt tranſient glance upon it. But he that, not contenting himſelf with ſo ſuperficial a view, ſhall defix his thoughts, and maturely conſider the intendment of our Saviour in this Figure, will partly by the Occaſion upon which it was delivered, and partly by the thread of the Parable it ſelf, moſt aſſuredly be led into an apprehenſion of ſome greater myſtery therein contained. For taking his view from ſuch ſtation, and thence attentively ſurveying the whole ſcope and deſign of this Scripture, he will find in the general, that herein is traced out the journey from *Ægypt* (a ſtate of ſervitude) to the Land of Promiſe, through a troubleſome and diſconſolate wilderneſs; or the paſſage from the brink of Hell to the gates of Heaven. More particularly he will obſerve the unhappy onſet and beginnings, the crooked and troubleſome proceedings, the dangerous precipices, and the horrid and fatal miſchiefs of a ſinfull courſe, graphically deſcribed: He will alſo deſcry the direct, but laborious, the ſorrowfull, but certain way of recovery: And laſtly, the glorious triumph, the comfortable condition, and the ſure ſtation of him that hath happily conquered the aforeſaid difficulties, and is arrived at the ſerene top of Vertue; together with the general

*Inter omnes Chriſti Parabolas, hæc ſanè eſt eximia, plena affectuum, & pulcherrimis pictæ coloribus.* H. Grot. *in* v. 20.

applauſe, and univerſal Jubilee of Heaven and Earth upon ſuch an atchievement.

And in confidence that all theſe things are pointed at, and intended in the ſcene before us, (as I do not doubt but will be evident by and by,) I do deſign to take occaſion from hence to diſcourſe ſomewhat fully and practically of theſe three very important particulars: (*viz.*)

1. Of the nature of Sin, and the miſchiefs of a wicked courſe.

2. Of the nature and admirable efficacy of Repentance.

Laſtly, Of the exorableneſs of the Divine Majeſty, and the unexpreſſible benignity and graciouſneſs with which he entertains returning ſinners.

And, provided the management prove anſwerable to the deſign, I cannot in the leaſt miſtruſt the acceptableneſs of a work of this nature to any ſort of men who have ſo much ſeriouſneſs and manly ſenſe in them, as to value things in proportion to their real uſefulneſs; foraſmuch as there is not that ſubject to be treated of, which comes more cloſe and home to the greateſt concerns of all mankind. For,

In the firſt place, There are ſcarcely any ſo prodigiouſly vain, as not to acknowledge themſelves to be ſinners: And what can be of more uſe to him that makes that acknowledgment, than to underſtand what it is which makes Sin to be ſinfull, what gives it its malignity, and makes guilt inſeparably to adhere to it, what are the ſeveral ſtates of ſin and ſinners, and eſpecially what is the natural courſe and tendency, the ſudden growth and unhappy progreſs of ſin? Since hereby his conſcience being inlightned, will be both better able to make

make juſt reflections upon what is paſt, and alſo be made more cautious and diligent for the time to come.

And although it be true that every man hath not run the ſame mad risk of ſin which is here decyphered in the Prodigal Son: Yet as that is owing to the eſpecial providence and preventing grace of God, where-ever the caſe is ſuch; ſo that happy perſon will, by obſerving the wild extravagances, the extreme follies and horrid miſchiefs, which others incur before converſion, be the more provoked to adore the Divine Goodneſs in his own preſervation.

Again, What can be of more moment to thoſe that are apprehenſive of the Majeſty and Purity of God, of the holineſs of his Laws, of the certainty of a Judgment to come, and withall are ſenſible of the frailty of humane nature, and conſcious of their own many and great miſcarriages, than to behold the nature of Repentance plainly deſcribed, and to be inſtructed in the methods of making good their retreat, of recovering themſelves, and ſucceſsfully recommending their deplorable ſtate and condition to the Divine Philanthropy and Mercy?

Laſtly, What can be more raviſhingly comfortable to a contrite ſinner, than to underſtand the efficacy of true Repentance, to ſee a door of hope open to the worſt of ſinners upon their coming to themſelves, and returning to their duty, to be aſſured of the hearty compaſſions of the Divine Majeſty, to ſee the arms of the Almighty open to receive and embrace returning Children; and all this as it were in perſpective, lively repreſented?

§. II. But in regard it is a Parable which we have in hand, I think my ſelf obliged (in order to the laying a good foundation of what we ſhall afterwards build upon it) here in our entrance to premiſe ſomething briefly, firſt, touching the ancient uſe of this Schematical and Figurative way of expreſſion, and the Reaſon of ſuch uſage; ſecondly, touching the Explication and Application of ſuch kind of diſcourſes.

And for the firſt of theſe, I cannot reaſonably imagine, that any man who ſhall peruſe theſe Papers, ſhould be ſo great a ſtranger to all that hath paſt in former times, as not to be aware, that it was the general cuſtom of Wiſe men of old, to deliver their Sentiments after this manner and in ſuch a ſtyle; and this not only in meer humane and common Writings, but even in Sacred Writ it ſelf.

To ſay nothing of the famous Oracles of the *Gentiles*, which in other circumſtances as well as in this of Myſteriouſneſs, have been obſerved to Ape and imitate thoſe of the true God: And to paſs by the ancient Poets, who were reputed as both the Divines and the Philoſophers of the Ages in which they lived, and who were well known to have affected an Oracular obſcurity, as much as the Oracles affected their way of verſifying: If we take notice of the ancient Proverbs of Nations, which are ſuppoſed to carry the marks of the wiſdom of their reſpective times and people, theſe we find for the moſt part obſcure and Ænigmatical. And for the ancient Philſophers, and men of renown, ſuch as the Wiſe men of *Greece*, diſtinctively ſo called, or ſuch as *Pythagoras*, *Socrates*, &c. who were no whit Inferiour to the

the former, he knows nothing of them that is not ſenſible, not only of accidental, but alſo of deſigned obſcurity in their writings and ſayings.

As for the Sacred Writings of the Old Teſtament, though with all good men I worthily adore that Divine Spirit which made choice of and directed the Pen-men of Holy Scripture; and readily acknowledge both the plainneſs and perſpicuity thereof in the neceſſary rules of life, without which it could not have anſwered the ends of the Divine Wiſdom in the enditing of it; and alſo that whereſoever it is abſtruſe, it is as far from phantaſtry and affected obſcurity, as the *Pagan* Oracles were notoriouſly guilty thereof: Notwithſtanding it cannot be denied, but that as well the Prophets as other holy Pen-men do frequently make uſe of Metaphors, Allegories, and other Schematical forms, which muſt needs be attended with competent obſcurity, theſe being as it were a veil drawn over the face of Divine Truth. Hence it is that *Solomon* makes *the words of the wiſe*, and *their dark ſayings*, to be two expreſſions denoting the ſame thing: For, as he in another place ſpeaks, their diſcourſes *are like Apples of Gold in Pictures of Silver*; that is, beſides a truth and beauty in the outſide or caſe of the letter, they had a more rich and precious meaning within. And accordingly we may obſerve the Apoſtles of our Lord, in the New Teſtament, frequently to fix upon and purſue a myſtical ſenſe of ſome of thoſe paſſages in the Old Teſtament, which would to an ordinary Reader have ſeemed moſt ſtrictly and literally to be underſtood. Prov. 1. 6. Prov. 25. 11.

Yet I do not think this will prove a ſufficient warrant for *Philo*, or ſome other *Jewiſh* Writers, to turn all thoſe ſacred Records into Allegory:

Nor that it will altogether excuse those ancient Learned Christians from all mistake, who thought there was no way of reaching the full sense of the Old Testament, but by tracing a perpetual Metaphor, and looking every-where beyond the letter.

However their practice makes it sufficiently evident, that it was the common sense of Antiquity, that the style of those Writings was mysterious and figurative, which is enough for my present purpose.

§. III. If now we proceed to enquire into the Reasons of this usage; so far as concerns the *Pagan* Mysteries, we may say with justice enough, that it was their interest to hide those things from the light, that could not endure the trial of it: and for a great many of their Philosophers, they designed more to procure a veneration to their own persons, than to benefit the world; and chose rather to seem wise themselves, than endeavour to make others to be so. Or at least the not improbable account which S. *Clement* of *Alexandria* gives of this matter may satisfie us, whose words are these, *The manner and style in which the* Greek *Philosophers handled their Philosophy was like to that of the* Hebrews, *dark and ænigmatical:* for from them, whom they esteemed and called *Barbarians*, did those admired Sages (as that Learned Author shews at large) borrow or steal most of that which was remarkable amongst them: and then no wonder if they took the Casket with the Jewel; the manner of delivery, as well as the matter they delivered.

Ὁ δὲ τρόπος παρ' αὐτοῖς φιλοσοφίας Ἑβραϊκὸς καὶ αἰνιγματώδης. Clem. Alex. *Strom. lib.* 1.

But now if our curiosity lead us farther, to consider, what should be the reasons why the Sacred Writers themselves observed this style, there are several things may be noted as of great moment in the case. Namely,

1. For-

1. Foraſmuch as the Divine Wiſdom ſaw it fit in the infancy of the world, to exhibit a diſcovery of his mind and will, ſuitable to the capacity of the Men and the Age, reſerving the more full and adequate delivery of himſelf to the fulneſs of time, when the minds of men, having been opened and enlarged by degrees, ſhould by thoſe previous applications be prepared and made capable of thoſe brighter beams of Divine Truth, which he ultimately intended to diſplay: Hereupon it was neceſſary, that the Prophets and holy Pen-men ſhould be directed in ſuch ſort, as that on the one hand, and in the letter, their diſcourſes ſhould condeſcend to the preſent diſpenſation; but yet withall ſhould on the other hand reflect and glance upon, and give ſome hints of that which was principally intended, and hereafter to be clearly revealed. From whence it muſt needs come to paſs, (both the aforeſaid purpoſes being joyntly to be purſued) that there muſt be a frequent uſe of Figures and Allegories, and conſequently ſome Obſcurity.

2. But then, ſecondly, Becauſe it was not the mind of God, wholly to cloud and obſcure the glories that were afterwards to appear, he ordered it ſo, that ſuch a thin veil drawn over the matter ſhould not more ſet off its beauty than ſtir up the attention of the mind, and allure men to a very diligent inquiſition. For, as much as utter obſcurity of the matter, or abſolute impoſſibility of accompliſhing what is deſigned, to diſcourage and blaſt both enquiry and endeavour: ſo much doth moderate and not inſuperable, either difficulty or obſcurity, inflame a generous mind to comprehend and conquer; and as none but fools reach at plain impoſſibilities, ſo none but

but ignoble and little ſpirits are beaten off by meer difficulty. Thus in effect this way of writing became a *Lapis Lydius*, or Touchſtone of minds, fit for and capable of excellent improvements. And this is the very account which S. *Juſtin* the Philoſopher and Martyr gives of this matter. *The Prophets* (ſaith he) *did cover the things they delivered under Types and Parables, inſomuch that it was not eaſie for every one to underſtand many of thoſe things which they ſpoke of, and the rather becauſe they would exerciſe the diligence and ſtudy of thoſe that applied themſelves to their inſtructions.*

Juſtin *in dial. cum Tryphone Judæo.* Ὅσα ἔπον οἱ Προφῆται παραβολαῖς καὶ τύποις ἀπεκάλυψαν, ὡς μὴ ῥᾳδίως τὰ πλεῖστα ὑπὸ πάντων νοεῖσθαι. κρύπτοντες τὴν ἐν αὐτοῖς ἀλήθειαν, ὡς καὶ πονῆσαι τὰς ζητήσεις εὑρεῖν καὶ μαθεῖν.

Again, thirdly, this way of expreſſion recommended it ſelf upon this account, that whatſoever was repreſented in this Parabolical way, was apt to inſinuate more cloſely, and work more powerfully upon the affections. Foraſmuch as in this caſe the mind was not only addreſſed to, by the meer dint of reaſon, but truth was in a manner made viſible, and ſet off in ſuch lively colours, that the imagination being impregnated, the paſſions were eaſily carried along too. To which add, that hereby alſo the memory was exceedingly fortified; for ſuch things as we feel and ſee, or which our imaginations have an expreſs image of, and our affections reliſh, thoſe things always ſtick by us. All which conſiderations laid together, will amount to a ſatisfaction of the reaſonableneſs of that figurative obſcurity, which we obſerve in the writings of the Old Teſtament, and may in part alſo extend to whatever is of that

kind

kind in the New. But yet perhaps there may remain ſome difficulty, why our Saviour who came to make a full, clear and ultimate diſcovery of the mind of God to the ſons of men, ſhould think fit to uſe this figurative way of expreſſion at ſo great a rate, as that the Evangeliſt ſaith, *without a parable ſpake he not unto them.* Touching which I have theſe things further to ſay.

Firſt, by what hath been ſaid already it appears, the people of the *Jews*, amongſt whom our Saviour came, had been always trained up in an Allegorical way, and had it in ſuch eſteem, that they thought no man fit to teach that could not handſomely conceal and ſhade his ſenſe, *ſi quis noverit uti perplexiloquio, loquatur, ſin minùs taceat.* And therefore by an admirable dexterity in the uſe of Parables, he marvellouſly recommended his diſcourſes to the guſt of that people: and had it not been that they were filled with intolerable prejudices againſt him for the meanneſs of his outward appearance, and upon other ſuch like accounts, they muſt of neceſſity have had his wiſdom in great veneration.

But beſides this general account, our Saviour himſelf gives us a peculiar reaſon of this his practice, eſpecially upon that kind of people, in theſe words, *Matt.* 13. 11, 12, 13, 14, 15. *To you it is given* (ſpeaking to his Diſciples) *to underſtand the myſteries of the Kingdom of Heaven. But to them* (meaning the generality of the *Jews*) *it is not given; for whoſoever hath, to him ſhall be given, and he ſhall have more abundance; but from him that hath not, ſhall be taken away even that which he hath. Therefore ſpeak I to them in Parables, becauſe they ſeeing ſee not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they underſtand. And in them is fulfilled*

*the*

*the Prophecy of* Isaiah, *saying, hearing, ye shall hear, &c.* As if our Saviour had said, "You my Disciples who are of an humble and docible temper, and are content to use means, and to resort to me for the understanding of such things as I deliver; to you it shall be no disadvantage that they are cloathed in Parables: for (besides that I am ready to interpret every thing to you,) my discourses are so ordered, as to become plain and intelligible to such unprejudicate minds; the truth will shine through the veil, and the shadow shall guide you to the body and substance. But as for these proud and conceited Pharisees, that are transported with their own prejudices, and will neither understand nor practise things plainly delivered; for the just hardning of them, and such as they are, I deliver my self in such a manner as will not readily be apprehended by men of their temper. They shall choak themselves with the husks, whilst you feed upon the kernel. Much like to this is the account which *Jamblichus* gives of the obscurity of *Pythagoras*; saith he, Pythagoras *studied some obscurity in his dictates, to the intent that those only who were vertuously disposed and so prepared for his notions, might be benefited by his discourses, but as for others, they* (*as* Homer *saith of* Tantalus) *should be surrounded with such things as were in themselves very desirable, but not be able to touch or tast them.*

Συνεπικρύπτεσθαι αὐτὸν πολὺ τῶν λεγομένων. ὅπως οἱ μὲν καθαρῶς παιδευόμενοι. σαφῶς αὐτῶν μεταλαμβάνωσιν· οἱ δὲ (ὥσπερ Ὅμηρός φησι τὸν Τάνταλον) λυπῶνται παρόντων αὐτῶν ἐν μέσῳ τῶν ἀκουσμάτων, καὶ μηδὲν ἀπολαύοντες.

To which I add in the last place, this way of Parables, which our Saviour made such use of, in many

many caſes came more home to men's conſciences, and carried more conviction with it, than any other more expreſs and direct way of ſpeaking. For the Parables were commonly taken, *è medio*, from the common affairs of life, and grounded upon experience or acknowledged maxims: and now whilſt men readily acknowledged that in the *Protaſis* or former part of the Parable (not knowing whither it tended, or what the ἀπόδοσις would be,) they were utterly ſurprized and confounded afterwards by the patneſs of the application. For though they could have been willing to have diſallowed what they ſaw touched their concern; yet having already unawares granted that from which it would unavoidably follow, they were intangled in a net and could neither go backward nor forward: for if they went forward, they came over to him and quitted their principles; and to go backward, was baſely to deny their own conceſſions. Thus it fared with *David* in the famous Parable of *Nathan*, upon occaſion of the Adultery with *Bathſheba* and Murther of her Huſband *Uriah*, the King preſently condemns the fact, ſo long as he knew not the Malefactor, and therefore when the Prophet came over him, ſaying, *thou art the man*, he was left without all evaſion or apology, and ſo brought to repentance. And in like manner the ſame *David* was intrapped by a like Parable, which *Joab* put into the mouth of the Woman of *Tekoah*, for the recalling of *Abſalom*. And after this rate our Saviour ſeveral times circumvents the Phariſees, and eſpecially in this preſent Parable, as will evidently appear anon, when we come to open the occaſion of it; but ſo much for the firſt Point.

*Illi (ex antiquo) qui ſimpliciter, & demonſtranda rei causâ loquebantur, parabolis referti ſunt, quas exiſtimo neceſſarias, ut imbecillitatis noſtræ admonicula, & ut diſcentem & audientem in rem præſentem adducant.* Sen. ep. 59.

2 Sam. 12.

2 Sam. 14.

§. IV.

§. IV. 2. Touching the Second, *viz.* the application of this kind of discourses, I am well aware that sundry Judicious Divines both of former and later times, have complained of great mistakes in doctrine, and many mischiefs done to religion by the too curious and particular Interpretations of Parabolical Passages of Scripture: and not without cause; for it is too easie to observe those that having taken their rise from the Letter of a Text, have soared so aloft in a strain of allegory, that they have gone a pitch beyond all sober sense, at least out of the ken of all ordinary understandings, and strained a metaphor so far that they have broken all in pieces. Others have forced similitudes to run of all four, and upon some obscure and far-fetched resemblance have given countenance to their own dreams and phancies, and represented the Holy Spirit of God as intimating what he never intended. I remember also what an acute person of the last Age pronounced, that it was not to be called an exposition, but a divination, which departed from the letter; and he that used such liberty was rather a lawmaker than an interpreter of laws, and might dictate whatsoever he pleased at this rate. All this is well said. But then on the other side it must be acknowledged too, that at least the general design and greater lines of a sacred Parable are argumentative, otherwise our Saviour would not have made such use of them as he did, nor would they have had that effect they had frequently upon the hearers: and if this were not true, a great part of the Gospels would be only Romance to

Lord *Bacon's* Advance.

Allegories in true Theology always include arguments of proportion, and so are as firm as any Geometrical demonstration.

Dr. *Tho. Jackson* on the *Creed*, *lib.* 8.

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amuſe us, and not Doctrine to inſtruct us. And although it be true that ſuch proof will not be convictive upon ſome kind of men, yet that is no objection in the caſe, foraſmuch as no other, the moſt direct proofs, will ſerve the turn with ſome perſons: nor was it the deſign of God, as I have intimated already, to put a flat neceſſity upon men, and to render it impoſſible for them not to believe; it is ſufficient to the intention of the Holy Scripture that an honeſt mind, may, by conſidering the occaſion, and comparing therewith the make and fabrick of a Parable, diſcern what is drove at through the whole.

But beſides, I think this Parable before us hath peculiar advantages of all other, and that it was deſigned by the wiſdom of our Saviour not only to fit the occaſion in general, but alſo to carry a reſemblance in particular, and graphically to deſcribe the very nature and manner of the thing he was diſcourſing of. And that which confirms me in this perſuaſion (beſides the natural accord of things, and wonderfull eaſineſs of application without force or ſtraining) is, that I obſerve men of the greateſt learning and judgment both ancient and modern, and who are apparently the moſt free and untainted with the aforeſaid humour of Allegorizing, to follow the traces of the figure with a moral application quite through this Parable. Out of the great number of which I will ſelect only two for inſtances, S. *Jerome* amongſt the ancients, and *Hugo Grotius* for the modern. The former of which, at the intreaty of no leſs a Man than Pope *Damaſus*, makes a particular interpretation of this Parable in all the branches of it, which is the ſubſtance of his 146. Epiſtle, whoſe expoſi-

*Videtur autem praeter ſimilitudinem totius, etiam partibus ineſſe τὸ ἀλληγορέμενον.*

expoſition I have for the moſt part followed in this preſent diſcourſe. The other, I mean the Judicious *Hugo Grotius*, to the words I lately cited from him, for the excellency of this Parable ſubjoyns theſe following, (*in ver.* 22.) *Beſides a general reſemblance of the thing, it ſeems to carry on the allegory through the particular parts alſo.* And again a while after, *Though* (ſaith he) *we are not ſolicitouſly to inquire for a moral meaning of every paſſage in theſe alluſive diſcourſes; yet in this Parable where the phraſes made uſe of are by other Scriptures interpreted to ſuch a particular ſenſe, it is unreaſonable to neglect it.*

*Sicut non anxiè conquirendæ ſunt ai ἀλληγορίαι, in parabolis comparationum; ita hîc non negligendæ, cùm eas aliorum locorum comparatio ſuggerat.*

Theſe reaſons and authorities together, will (I doubt not) juſtifie a particular application of this Parable: Notwithſtanding, that there may be the fulleſt ſecurity againſt the miſchiefs ſpecified in the entrance of this point, I will take care that in the following diſcourſe, no doctrine ſhall be obtruded upon the bare warrant of ſimilitude or figurative reſemblance, but whatſoever ſhall be delivered, ſhall be both grounded upon ſome expreſs and literal Texts of Scripture, and atteſted by the conſent of the Ancient Fathers.

And now (theſe things premiſed) I proceed more cloſely to purſue my purpoſe in the particular handling of the Parable.

CHAP.

# CHAP. II.

## The occaſion and expoſition of this Parable.

### The CONTENTS.

§. I. *The adverſaries of our Saviour's Doctrine contradict each other, ſome accuſing it of too great difficulty, others as a Doctrine of licentiouſneſs, the occaſion of this latter miſpriſion of it amongſt the Gentiles, a fabulous ſtory of* Conſtantine's *converſion, the occaſion of the* Jews *miſapprehenſion.*

§. II. *Three ranks of* Jews, *a maxim of theirs built upon that diſtinction, the craſs ſenſe they had of the Moſaick Covenant, which things in ſpecial gave riſe to their calumnies againſt our Saviour's Doctrine and Practice, from which he vindicates himſelf by this Parable.*

§. III. *A literal paraphraſe upon the Parable.*

§. IV. *The true interpretation of the Parable, who is meant by the elder, and who by the younger brother, the parts of the Parable, and of the enſuing Diſcourſe.*

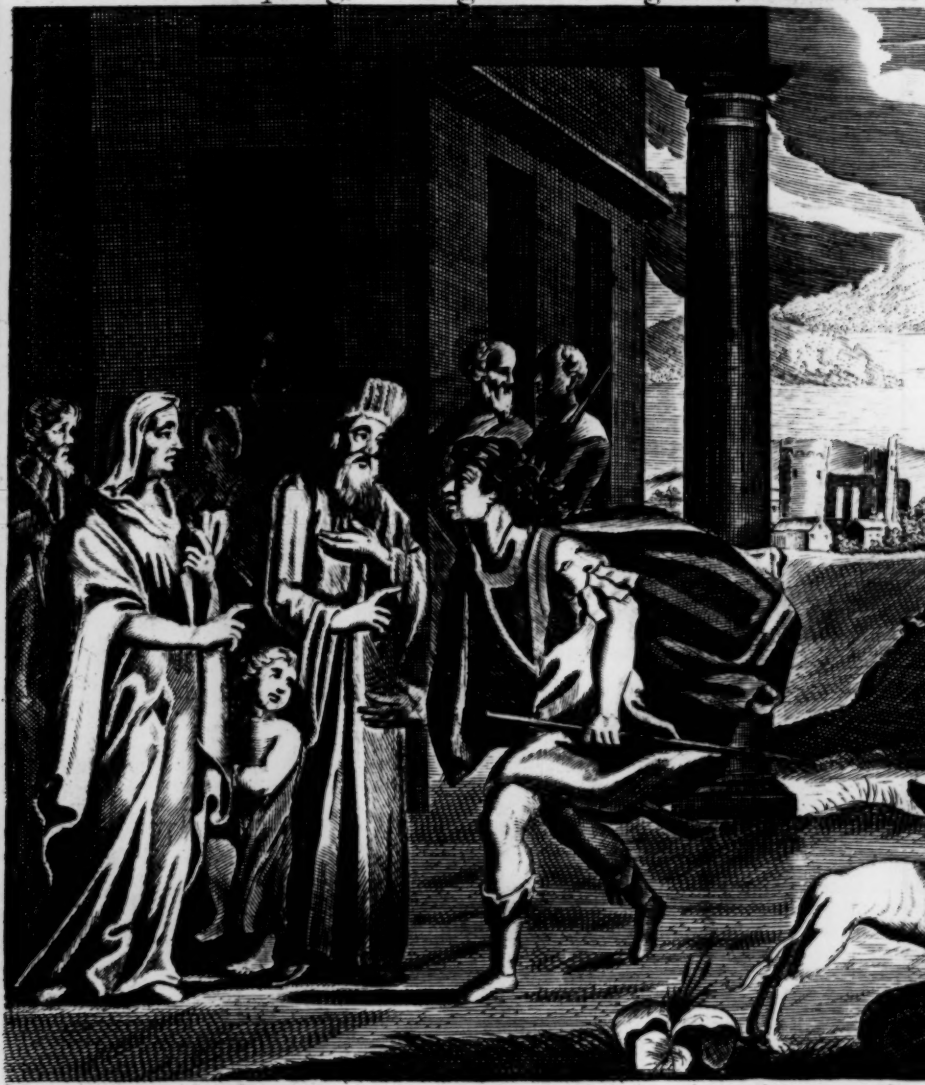
IT is a neceſſary rule amongſt all Expoſitors to look attentively on the occaſion, and from the riſe to judge of the ſcope and tendency of the diſcourſe: And this is moſt eſpecially requiſite to be done in the interpretation of figurative paſſages, in regard there is nothing ſo like but it is alſo unlike, nor ſo reſembles any one thing but in ſome reſpects it may reſemble another; and therefore here, like thoſe that ſail in a narrow channel,

where the Stars or the Card are too general directors, they are forced to ſail by coaſting, as they call it; ſo muſt we in the explication of a Parable (where there is not always to be expected, a determinate and neceſſary ſenſe of every phraſe, as in more direct diſcourſes,) govern our ſelves by the general aim, and be ſure to ſet out right at firſt from the deſign of it.

Now in order to the diſcovery of the true occaſion of this Parable, it is of uſe to note, That as it was the lot of our Saviour himſelf When he was arraigned by the *Jews*, to be accuſed by ſuch as agreed no better among themſelves than with the truth; and whoſe ſeveral teſtimonies more impeached the credit of each other than preſſed him againſt whom they were ſuborned: So it hath often fared with his Doctrine and Religion, to be accuſed of things inconſiſtent with each other; inſomuch that commonly the ſeveral imputations mutually confuting each other, have jointly vindicated (inſtead of aſperſing) Chriſtianity.

The ſpecial inſtance which I am now concerned to aſſign of this matter, is, that the ſame inſtitution hath by different perſons been accuſed of difficulty and facility; as an intolerable burthen by ſome, as a doctrine of looſeneſs and licentiouſneſs by others. The former of theſe accuſers have commonly been a ſort of looſe pretenders to Chriſtianity, who becauſe the Goſpel requires that we love the Lord our God with all our hearts, and ſoul, and ſtrength, that we live in all good conſcience both towards God and man, that we reſtrain not only the outward acts of ſin, but ſubdue the very paſſion and inclination thereto, and upon ſuch-like accounts cry out *durus ſermo*, that it is a ſtrict and ſevere Law; and if this be Evangelical obedience,

The younger son gathers all together, and took his



*Non multò post institutionem humani generis, placuit animæ per liber*
*naturæ suæ, et deserere eum à quo condita est, perfidens viribu*

ok his journey into a far Country. St. LVKE. 15.13.

er liberum arbitrium ferre secum quandam velut potentiam
viribus suis. St. August: Qu: Evang: Lib: 2.d

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obedience, it is impoſſible, and who then can be ſaved? And to help themſelves out of theſe difficulties, they run into wild perſuaſions, that either *Chriſt Jeſus* himſelf (who delivered this inſtitution) muſt in his own perſon ſo perform it inſtead of all that are to be ſaved, as to excuſe them the doing it, or elſe God muſt be pleaſed by miracle to over-bear them into the performance of it. But ſince theſe men profeſs Chriſtianity, I leave them to be ſilenced by the expreſs declaration of our Saviour, *Matt.* 11. 10. *My yoke is eaſie, and my burthen is light.*

The contrary ſort are thoſe I am more concerned in at preſent, namely ſuch as reproach Chriſtianity as a doctrine of eaſe and looſeneſs. Touching whom it is plain by the former objections, that this ſecond ſort of men muſt be abſolute ſtrangers to the tenour of the Religion they thus accuſe, *i. e.* they muſt be either *Jews* or *Gentiles.*

For the *Pagans*, they either hearing that Faith was inſiſted upon as the prime qualification of a Chriſtian, looked therefore upon the whole Religion as ψιλὴ πίστις, a bare credulity, a meer facility of mind, or a ſupine abandoning ones ſelf to the dictates and ſuggeſtions of others; or elſe conſidering that this Religion neither required nor practiſed the troubleſome and coſtly ſacrifices then in uſe amongſt other people, nor ſo much as made any account of thoſe nice obſervances, and very auſtere rites, that were in great reputation with all the world beſides, judged it therefore to be a very cheap and eaſie thing to be a Chriſtian: Or laſtly, obſerving that many who were conſcious of having lived wickedly heretofore, betook themſelves to, and found both cure and comfort in this inſtitution, they thereupon conclude it to be an Aſy-

lum and Sanctuary to looseness and debauchery.

Upon some or all of these accounts, the *Pagans* were generally abused into the aforesaid misprision of Christianity, touching the third and last of which stumbling-blocks I think it will not be unacceptable to the Reader, that I rehearse a famous story from the Ecclesiastical Historians to this effect.

When the great *Constantine* to his own immortal glory, and the great advantage of Christianity, espoused that Religion; the *Pagans*, to slur him and Religion together, devised this tale of him. That he having basely murthered his brother *Crispus*, and others of his near kindred, and feeling some remorse in his conscience for so great Barbarities, applied himself to *Sopater* the Philosopher and Successor of *Plotinus*, to be directed by him to some καθαρμὸς or expiation. But *Sopater* tells him that Philosophy afforded no remedy in so desperate a case. He then (saith the Story) goes to the Christian Bishops to get ease to his guilty and affrighted conscience; and they readily receiving and incouraging him that a little Baptismal water would wash out all that stain, and ease the smart; he hereupon finding this a Religion wherein a Man might reconcile the gratification of the most exorbitant passions with a quiet mind, became a Christian.

*Vid.* Sozom. *Hist. lib.* 3. *cap* 9. Evagr. *lib.* 3. *cap.* 41.

*Theodoret* who relates this Fable, thinks (as well he might) that it concerned his profession of Christianity to shew the falshood of it. And therefore after he had first retorted it upon the *Pagans* themselves, shewing that if it had been true, it was no more than had been allowed amongst them in the case of their famous *Hercules*; he afterwards demonstrates the utter absurdity and impossibility of

of the fiction, in regard it might appear by Authentick records, that *Criſpus* was alive long after *Conſtantine* became Chriſtian, ſurviving to the twentieth year of his reign, and ſubſcribing laws with him. Notwithſtanding the Story ſufficiently evidences, that the *Pagans* had entertained ſuch a ſiniſter conceit of Chriſtianity, as that it favoured vice and licentiouſneſs, and thereupon were prejudiced againſt it.

But to paſs over their groſs miſapprehenſions, and come to the *Jews*, they alſo had alike diſhonourable opinions of the Chriſtian inſtitution as a doctrine of looſeneſs. And theſe they ſeem to have taken up, partly upon occaſion that they obſerved our Saviour to lay no great ſtreſs upon their idle traditions, which they were infinitely ſcrupulous about; partly alſo becauſe though they could not but obſerve that he was a moſt holy and diligent obſerver of the Law, yet in ſome caſes, as that of the Sabbath, and ſuch like, he interpreted it *ex æquo & bono*, and made the letter ſubmit to the reaſon and ſenſe of it, whereupon they cried out he diſſolved the law. Neither was it a ſmall acceſſion to their ſuſpicions, that upon all occaſions he expoſed the ſanctimoniouſneſs of their admired *Phariſees*, whoſe reputation was ſo great with them, that they were ready to think all Religion was ſtruck at, when the inward rottenneſs of thoſe painted ſepulchres was diſcovered. But above all they ſeem to have been confirmed in this ill opinion of *Chriſt Jeſus* and his doctrine, when they noted that whereas the grave and demure *Phariſees*, the learned *Scribes*, the chief Prieſts and Rulers, and all the zealots of their Religion ſtood at a diſtance, and defied this new doctrine, thoſe that reſorted to our Saviour, and became his diſciples,

were generally perſons not only of mean quality, but had been many of them formerly infamous for their life and converſation, for ſo we find in the firſt and ſecond verſes of this Chapter, *Then drew near unto him all the Publicans and Sinners for to hear him, and the Scribes and Phariſees murmured, ſaying, This man receiveth ſinners, and eateth with them*; whereupon our Saviour takes up this and other Parables in this Chapter.

For the more clear underſtanding of which occaſion, and conſequently of the ſcope of the whole Parable, theſe things following are to be conſidered.

Arias Montanus *in elucid.*

§. II. 1. That the *Jews* (as to the affair of Religion) were wont to diſtinguiſh themſelves into three ranks or claſſes, the firſt and moſt eminent amongſt them were the *Phariſees* or *Separatiſts*, (as their name from פרש properly imports) called alſo frequently in their own writings חבירם, which we may appoſitely render Frieries or Fraternities: A very preciſe and ſtrict ſort of men in their way, as who obliged themſelves to the moſt ſtrict meaſures of ritual obſervance, faſting twice a week, frequent and curious in their waſhings, long in their prayers, broad in their phylacteries, demure in their behaviour, ſtately in their mein, ſtarched and ſtiff in every thing. They had a cuſtom of diſfiguring their faces to ſeem pale and mortified: And as they had artificial faces, ſo they had conſciences too, wondrous tender and ſenſible of little punctilio's, and the verieſt trifle that was out of the road of their ſect, but brawny and inſenſible of the higheſt violations of the laws of God. Their Religion was a kind of clock-work drawn up by the hand, and moving in a certain order, but without

out life or ſenſe. In ſhort, they had all the outward ſhews of admirable men, but nothing elſe; their devotions being calculated to take men, not to pleaſe God, and to better their intereſt and reputation with the people, not to benefit the world, or improve their own tempers. However what by their own confident pretenſions, and what by the credulity of thoſe that take all for gold that gliſters, theſe men obtained the reputation of the firſt rate of Religioniſts.

In the ſecond rank were thoſe which were called *Sapientum diſcipuli*, the diſciples of the wiſe men; theſe did not conſtitute a peculiar ſect as the former, neither did they oblige themſelves to all the punctuality and phantaſtry which the other did, but they were ſuch as applied themſelves diligently to the ſtudy of the law, and governed themſelves by the traditions of the great Rabbins, and by ſuch interpretations as they had been pleaſed to make upon the Text. Theſe I take it, are thoſe who are commonly called by the name of Scribes in the New Teſtament, and ſometimes Lawyers alſo, for that thoſe two names were of the ſame ſignification, ſeems to be evident by S. *Luke* 11. 44, 45. When our Saviour had a great while inveighed againſt the Phariſees, and at laſt had joyned the Scribes with them, *Then anſwered one of the Lawyers and ſaid, Maſter*, now thou *reproacheſt us alſo.* And theſe men whether called Lawyers. or Scribes, or Wiſe men, though they diſtinguiſhed themſelves by no peculiar garb and cognizance as the former, nor made a ſect in Religion, yet becauſe they devoted themſelves to the ſtudy of their religious writings, were looked upon as conſervators of their Religion, and arrived at a great opinion of ſanctity. Inſomuch that there is a well-

known ſaying amongſt the *Jews*, That if but two men were to be ſaved, or have a part in the other world, the one would certainly be a Phariſee, and the other a Scribe. And in relation to this opinion of theirs, our Saviour ſaith to his diſciples, *Matth.* 5. 20. *Except your righteouſneſs exceed the righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſes, ye ſhall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, i. e.* if you be my diſciples indeed, you muſt outſtrip thoſe two admired ſorts of men, as much as they are ſuppoſed to outgo all others.

The third rank were ordinary *Jews*, called in contempt *populus terræ*, the people of the land, who lived a common life without any nicety of obſervation, or peculiar note of diſtinction. Theſe men might perhaps live honeſtly, and it may be alſo exceed both the former in real vertues of the ſoul; but forasmuch as they exacted of themſelves nothing ſingular, nor affected any curioſity, they had no remark upon them, but were valued much after the rate that we commonly ſignifie when we ſay a good honeſt moral well-meaning man.

But now for ſuch as were found guilty of living in any open and ſcandalous ſins, ſuch as fornication, and the like; theſe were held (and that deſervedly enough) in no rank of Religion, and amongſt theſe they reckoned Publicans alſo; that is, ſuch as being native *Jews*, became inſtruments of the *Roman* power, collecting tribute for them of their own Nation, and both the one and the other of theſe were in no other eſtimation than Heathens, for ſo we find Publicans and Sinners, Heathens and Publicans, commonly joyned together under the ſame brand of reproach and contempt in the Goſpel.

2. It is to be obſerved in conſequence of the former diſtinction, that whereas for the third ſort of men of whom they had no great eſteem, it was accounted no wonder that they being *filii terræ*, men of a meer ſecular character, did hold correſpondence, and had intercourſe with Publicans and Sinners, that is, ſuch as were proſcribed the Cenſe of Religion; nevertheleſs for any perſon of the two firſt ranks ſo to have done, namely, to be found maintaining any kind of ſociety or friendly converſation with ſuch infamous perſons, was held not only diſhonourable and unbecoming, but flatly unlawfull. For according to a tradition yet extant in their writings, it is reckoned as one of the ſix ſcandals that thoſe higher Orders of Religioniſts are charged by all means to avoid, namely, to dine, eat or drink with ſuch. Now this ſeems to be the firſt occaſion of quarrel againſt our Saviour, that he pretending to be ſome extraordinary perſon, at leaſt a Student of the Law, did not uſe ſuch branded perſons with the ſame ſupercile and diſdain that their great men were wont to do, but familiarly diſcourſed, eat and drank with them. For ſo we read, *Matt.* 9. 10, 11. *And it came to paſs as Jeſus ſate at meat, many Publicans and Sinners came and ſate down with him and his diſciples, and when the Phariſees ſaw it, they ſaid unto his diſciples, Why eateth your Maſter with Publicans and Sinners*, &c. Vid. *Quiſtorp. in loc.*

Let it be farther noted in the third place,

3. That the Covenant which God made with this people on Mount *Sinai*, admitted of propitiation by ſacrifice, and thereby gave hopes of pardon only to ſome ſmaller offences, but ſeemed to exclude all great and notorious tranſgreſſors, ſhutting them up under wrath, and appointing them

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to be cut off from amongſt their people. And the minds of the *Jews* not being elevated above this literal diſpenſation, nor being able to diſtinguiſh betwixt this political tranſaction, and the eternal ſtandard of juſtice and mercy in the divine mind, they were induced to believe, that God would exerciſe mercy upon no other terms than what he therein proclaimed, and that he was inexorable and implacable in all other caſes beyond the tenour of that indulgence: whence it came to paſs that they themſelves in proportion (as they thought) to the divine proceedings, abandoned all the aforeſaid kinds of notorious ſinners as caſtaways, conceiving neither hopes of their pardon, nor uſefulneſs of indeavouring to bring them to repentance.

And although the excellent diſcourſes of the Prophets might have inſtructed them with better and more worthy notions of God, yet they ſuperſtitiouſly contracting thoſe Evangelical expreſſions in the Prophets to the narrow ſenſe of the Law, rather than improving the text of the Law by the Divine Commentaries of the Prophets, continued ſtill under the ſame mean and narrow apprehenſions of divine mercy, and conſequently thereof muſt needs pronounce very ſad and diſmal dooms upon all great ſinners.

But foraſmuch as they could not but remember the very great and foul miſcarriages of ſome (otherwiſe) very holy men in the Old Teſtament, and particularly of *David* in his Adultery with *Bathſhebah*, and the Murther of *Uriah*, for neither of which ſins any ſacrifice or propitiation was appointed in the Law, but the offender in ſuch caſes was to be cut off without mercy: Therefore that they might not be conſtrained in conſequence of

*Vid.* Grot. in ver. 2.

of the aforeſaid perſuaſion, to exclude ſuch men from all hopes of pardon too, they had artifices of extenuating ſuch mens ſins, (as no doubt they had of their own) and rather than forego their hide-bound notion of God, choſe againſt all ſenſe to make thoſe black crimes, meer peccadillo's, leſt by the example of ſuch great men (as *David*, &c.) other ſinners ſhould be incouraged to hope for mercy, beyond the tenour of their Law.

Now our Saviour preaching repentance, and giving hopes of pardon to the greateſt of ſinners, upon condition of their preſent, hearty, and thorough reformation; ſeveral poor ſouls who had been reprobated and damned by theſe ſevere Interpreters of the Law, were marvellouſly tranſported at ſo comfortable a doctrine, and with great affection and frequency reſort to it. Hereupon theſe demure but dogged Leguleians are offended, and inſinuate a ſuſpicion of our Saviour, that he was a friend and favourer of lewd and vicious perſons. This (I take it) is the true ſtate of the caſe, and the riſe of the excellent diſcourſes in this Chapter.

For in anſwer to their unjuſt imputation, our Saviour who could (if he had pleaſed) have ſhewed the ſandy foundation of all their aforeſaid Hypotheſis, by diſcovering the deſigns of the divine wiſedom in that manner of tranſaction with that people in that covenant, or by large deductions from the Prophets have demonſtrated the uncircumſcribedneſs of the divine goodneſs, or with admirable wiſedom ſilenced them by a Philoſophick diſcourſe of the divine Philanthropy; he I ſay that could have vindicated his own doctrine and practice, and both baffled their arrogance, and ſhamed their ignorance, any of theſe or other ways, waves

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all this, and takes a more plain and popular argument, confounding them by an appeal to the common ſenſe of mankind, much after the manner that God ſilences the petulant diſguſts of the Prophet *Jonah*. *Jonah* was angry with God for being more exorable towards the *Ninevites* than he expected, and would needs have had a vaſt and populous City deſtroyed, meerly to make good his own prediction. But God convinces him of his unreaſonableneſs by a lively Emblem. There was a Gourd ſuddenly ſprung up which refreſhed the Prophet with its verdure, and covered him with its ſhadow. God who had cauſed the Gourd to grow, quickly ſmites it; hereupon *Jonah* is angry again, and expoſtulates the matter with his Maker.

John 4. 10, 11. To whom the Almighty replies, *thou hadſt pity on a contemptible Gourd for which thou didſt not labour, and which came up in a night and periſhed in a night, And ſhould not I ſpare* Nineveh *that great City,* (upon their repentance) *wherein are more than one hundred and twenty thouſand perſons that cannot diſcern between their right hand and their left*, &c.

In like manner our Saviour here ſilences the murmurings of theſe hard-hearted *Jews*, by three Parables: The firſt concerning a Loſt Sheep, *verſ.* 4. The ſecond concerning a Loſt Groat, *verſ.* 8. And the third of a Loſt Son, *verſ.* 11. In all which he appeals to common experience and the ſenſe of humanity, for evidence of the fitneſs of his proceedings, and the abſurdity of their complaints; ſhewing that it is the common courſe of men, to expreſs moſt ſolitude for that which is loſt, and moſt joy upon the recovery of that which was given up as deſperate. And forasmuch as the ſouls of men muſt needs be more valuable with a wiſe God, and a gra-

a gracious Creator, than thoſe other things can be with men, he leaves it to them to inferr how reaſonable it is to think that the divine goodneſs is both highly pleaſed with the recovery of loſt ſinners, and with the means thereunto ſubſervient The conſequence of which would be, that they muſt certainly ſee great reaſon to admire our Saviour's compaſſion, and condeſcenſion to the needs and ſad condition of ſuch men, as hugely agreeable and conducent to the ends of divine goodneſs, and none at all of traducing either his doctrine or carriage, as guilty of giving incouragement to looſeneſs and extravagancy.

Thus we ſee the occaſion which led our Saviour to make uſe of this Parable, and thereby we are directed to the main ſcope and drift of it, by advantage whereof we will in the next place make the following paraphraſtical expoſition of it.

§. III. As if our Saviour had expreſt himſelf more at large to this effect: "A certain man "had two ſons, one whereof, and he the eldeſt, "continued always in his family, content with "his proviſion, ſubject to his government, and in "diligent obedience to all his commands. But "the other, (*viz.*) the younger, full of juvenile "heat and confidence, conſiders himſelf at the "age of diſcretion, grows impatient of reſtraint, "and deſirous of liberty, eſpecially fancying that "he could live better to his own content, and "every whit as well provide for himſelf, if he "were at his own diſpoſal. Therefore he deſires "his Father to ſet him out his ſhare, and to put "his portion into his own hands, and leave him "to his own conduct. The Father gratifies him "in all his deſires, gives him his portion and his "liberty.

" liberty. Which done, the Son, as if his Father's " preſence or vicinage would put too great a re- " ſtraint upon him, and give check to his freedom, " betakes himſelf to another Country, out of his " Father's eye, reach, and controll, and there in- " dulges himſelf the higheſt ſurfeit of licentiouſ- " neſs. By which means in a ſhort time (whileſt " he enjoying the preſent took no care for the " future) the ſtock his Father allotted him was " utterly exhauſted, and with that his pleaſures " alſo fail, the roots that miniſtred to them be- " ing thus dried up. And where his pleaſures " end, his cares begin; for now he hath leiſure to " look a little about him, and finds himſelf in a " bad caſe, having no courſe left, but either to " return to his Father, and confeſſing his folly " implore his compaſſion; or to put himſelf a ſer- " vant to a ſtranger, thereby to get a mean liveli- " hood. The former of theſe he was yet loth to " come to, having not as he thought tried ſuffici- " ently the folly of his own counſels; and to take " to himſelf the ſhame of his own ill conduct by " ſo plain a retreat, was thought a ſharper calami- " ty than any he yet felt: Therefore he reſolves " upon the latter, as if the ſeverities of a ſtranger " were more tolerable than the reproaches of a " Father; for he concluded a man was not per- " fectly miſerable that had no body to upbraid his " folly. And now being in a ſtrange Country, he " comforted himſelf with this, That if he ſhould " find none to pity him, he was ſure there would " be none could torture him with the grating re- " membrance of what he was and might have " been. Well, he becomes a ſervant, and he " that could not brook the grave reſtraint of pa- " ternal authority, now feels the heavy yoke of

" ſervile

" ſervile obedience; for he is put to the baſe
" drudgery of feeding Swine, and hath the courſeſt
" fare for his maintenance, the ſwine and the ſer-
" vant feed alike, upon husks, only with this dif-
" ference, ſome body cares for the hoggs, but no
" body for the ſlave; and the former have enough
" of that which agrees with them, but the latter
" is pinched with hunger, having not allowance
" of that ſordid dyet anſwerable to the importu-
" nity of his needs. Being ſorely afflicted with
" this, he that formerly dreamed of nothing but
" the ſweets of liberty, and the ſurfeits of volup-
" tuouſneſs, and never once thought of that hun-
" gry wolf, want and neceſſity, which now ſtands
" at his door, after many a ſad ſigh, diſcourſes
" thus with himſelf: Ah fool that I was, who
" knew not when I was well, that underſtood not
" contentment without ſatisfaction, nor could
" take up with the ſubſtance, but muſt graſp at
" ſhadows till I loſt both; that knew not what
" it was to be happy, but by the ſad experiment
" of becoming miſerable; that could not diſtin-
" guiſh between the chaſtiſements of a Father and
" the wounds of an enemy, nor believe but all
" yokes were equal, untill I was convinc'd by tri-
" al; that could not brook the government and
" reſtraints of my Father's family, though indear-
" ed by the reverence of my relation, and ſweet-
" ned by the benignity of his countenance and
" liberal proviſion for all neceſſity and delight;
" nor be ſatisfied of my Father's wiſdom, but by
" the effects of my own raſhneſs and folly. Time
" was when I had the reſpect and dignity of a
" a Son at home, who now find the contempt of
" a ſervant abroad. I was then put to no drudge-
" ry, nor had other task than to ſerve the honour

" and

"and intereſt of my Father: and in ſo doing I con-
"ſulted alſo mine own; for my duty and my
"happineſs were then united. But I am now put
"to the baſeſt office, to the vileſt employment as
"if my drudgery were not ſo much impoſed in
"order to my Maſter's profit, as to my own con-
"tumely. But that which comes nearer to me
"yet, and pinches me very ſore, is, That whereas
"in my Fathers houſe I could neither feel nor
"fear want, I can now hope for nothing elſe:
"There the meaneſt ſervant had bread, not only
"to the full, but to ſuperfluity; much leſs was
"any thing wanting to me then a Son. Now
"the caſe is ſadly alter'd, I that ſeldom had ſo
"much hunger as might ſerve for ſawce to the
"plenty of my Father's table, feel now the diffe-
"rence between the liberal hand of a Father, and
"the evil and niggardly eye of a hard Maſter.
"Oh the difference between the ſweete fume of
"plenty, and the gnawing pains of wind and
"emptineſs! What would I give now for what I
"have formerly waſted or deſpiſed! Then I loa-
"thed wholſome food, and now feed upon husks.
"How do I now envy the meaneſt ſervant in
"my Father's houſe; they have enough of all
"things, and I the want of all things; they ſur-
"feit and I ſtarve.

"But alaſs it is to no purpoſe to complain here,
"the Swine I feed cannot pity me, and the Ma-
"ſter I ſerve will not. There is no other choice
"left me now, but I muſt return to my Father
"or periſh; little did I think what would come
"of it when I forſook him, and perhaps as little
"doth he think what I have ſuffered ſince. If my
"ſufferings have brought down my proud heart
"and taught me ſubmiſſion, it may be my deplo-

"rable

" rable condition may move his bowels. It is true
" he caſt me not out, but I forſook and abandoned
" him; my youthful heat and folly precipitated
" me upon my own ruine: but as he hath more
" wiſdom than I, ſo perhaps the affections of a
" Father are more ſtrong than thoſe of a Child;
" and the more he ſees my fooliſhneſs, the more
" arguments will he find to ſhew me mercy.

" At leaſt I will make trial of his clemency, I
" will humbly proſtrate my ſelf before him, I'll em-
" brace thoſe knees that educated me, I'll lick the
" duſt of that threſhold which I contemptuouſly
" forſook, I'll own my fault and take ſhame to my
" ſelf, and ſo both magnifie his mercy if he receive
" me, and juſtifie his proceedings if he reject me.

" I know my Father is ſubject or obnoxious to
" no body; who ſhall blame him for pardoning,
" or ſet limits to his mercy? nay who can tell the
" meaſure of a Father's bowels? It may be too
" there is irreſiſtible eloquence in miſery, and the
" ſpectacle of a Son's adverſity may have rhetorick
" enough in it to carry the cauſe where a Father
" is Judge. Or if he, provoked by my folly at firſt,
" and extravagancy ſince, will no more own me as
" a ſon, perhaps he may receive me as a ſervant;
" for if my rebellion hath extinguiſhed in him the
" peculiar affections of a Father, yet it hath not
" deſtroyed the common paſſions of humanity, mer-
" cy and pity. If he will receive me in that lower
" quality, I am now broken to the condition of a
" ſervant, and ſhall think his yoke eaſie hereafter,
" having been inured to ſo ſharp and heavy an one;
" I will cheerfully ſubmit my ear to be bored to
" his door-poſt, and be his ſervant for ever.

" Or laſtly, if he will not truſt a runnagate, nor
" believe that he will ever prove a conſtant and

" perpetual ſervant that hath once deſerted his ſta-
" tion, let him be pleaſed to take me as an hired
" ſervant whom he may turn off at pleaſure; make
" trial of me, and admit me only upon good be-
" haviour. But if all fail, and he ſhould utterly
" caſt me off, (which yet I hope he will not) I
" can but periſh, and that I do however.

" Well, this being reſolved, he caſts a longing
" look towards his Father's houſe, and puts himſelf
" on his way thither. But no ſooner was he on
" his way, (though yet a great way off) but his
" Father ſpies him: thoſe lean and wan cheeks,
" and the hollow ſunken eyes his extremity had
" reduced him to, had not ſo dis-figured him, nor
" thoſe rags unable to cover his nakedneſs ſo diſ-
" guiſed him, but his Father knew him; and the
" memory of his former diſobedience had not ſo
" cancelled the intereſts of a Son, or ſhut up the
" bowels of a Father, but that the ſight of
" his preſent miſery kindled his compaſſion. And
" whilſt the ſon, partly through that weakneſs
" which his vices and his ſufferings had conſpired
" to bring upon him, and partly through a Combi-
" nation of ſhame and juſt fear of his Father's in-
" dignation, with difficulty makes towards him;
" the Father prompted by paternal affection, and
" tranſported between joy and pity, runs to meet
" him, falls on his neck and kiſſes him.

" The Son though aſtoniſhed at this condeſcen-
" ſion, and ſurprized with the unexpected benig-
" nity of ſuch a reception, yet could not but re-
" member what his Father's joy made him forget;
" namely, his former diſingenuity and rebellion:
" And therefore humbly falls on his knees again,
" and with ſhame and remorſe makes his contrite
" acknowledgment after this manner. Father (for

" ſo

" ſo this admirable goodneſs of yours gives me in-
" couragement to call you more than the blood
" and life which I derived from you,) I have I
" confeſs forfeited all the intereſt the privileges of
" my birth might haveafforded me in your affecti-
" on having become a rebel both towards God and
" you; had I not firſt neglected him, I am ſure I
" had never grieved you; and having forſaken
" you, I have not only violated the greateſt ob-
" ligation I had upon me, (ſave that to his divine
" Majeſty) but alſo deſpiſed and affronted a good-
" neſs like to his: whatſoever therefore I have ſuf-
" fered was but the juſt demerit of my folly and
" contumacy, and whatſoever ſentence you ſhall
" paſs upon me further I ſubmit to, and here expect
" my doom from you: I condemn my ſelf as no
" more worthy to be called your Son, be pleaſed
" to admit me but into the condition of your
" meaneſt ſervant, and I have more than my
" miſcarriages give me reaſon to hope for.

Whilſt the Son was going on at this rate, the Father's bowels yearned too earneſtly to admit of the delay of long Apologies, and therefore chooſes rather to interrupt him in his diſcourſe, than to adjourn his own joys or the others comfort: And becauſe he thought words not ſufficient in the caſe, he makes deeds the interpreters of his mind, commanding his ſervants forthwith " to bring out the
" beſt robe and to put it upon his Son, together with
" a ring on his hand, and ſhooes on his feet; *i. e.* in all points to habit him as his Son, and as the Son of ſuch a Father, by all which he maketh the full demonſtration of a perfect reconciliation: And not content herewith to give vent to his own joy, that it might not over-power him whilſt he confined it to his own boſom, and perhaps alſo that

thoſe who had ſhared with him in his ſorrows for the loſs of a beloved Son, might participate alſo in the joy of his recovery, he goes on, "Bring out "alſo the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat "and be merry; for this my Son was dead and is "alive again, was loſt and is found: and they be-"gan to be merry.

In the midſt of this extraordinary jollity, it happens the Elder Son, who (as we ſaid before) had always continued in his duty towards his Father, comes out of the fields where he had been negotiating his Fathers affairs, and wonders at the unuſual Jubilee: And when (demanding the occaſion) they of the family had made him acquainted with the whole matter, he takes it ill, and interpreting this marvellous tranſport of joy at his Brother's return to be in derogation from himſelf; as if his Father was too eaſie and inclinable towards him, but ſevere to himſelf, and unmindful of the long and faithful ſervice he had done him, begins to expoſtulate the matter ſomewhat warmly with his Father. But the good old man mildly replies, "Son, I am very ſenſible of, and ſet a juſt value "upon the long courſe of your obedience, and I "have it both in my power and in my will to re-"ward you. 'tis true, I have not hitherto made "ſuch ſolemn expreſſions of my love to you, as I "have now done upon this occaſion, for the caſe "did not require it; you, as you have been al-"ways dutiful to me, ſo you have had my houſe, "and all I have conſtantly to accommodate you; "as you have never rebelled againſt me, ſo you "have never felt the hardſhips your poor Brother "hath undergone by his fooliſhneſs; and as you "that have never offended me never could di-"ſtruſt my favour, nor need ſuch demonſtrations

"of

"of my reconciliation, which the former guilt "and extravagancies of your now penitent Bro- "ther renders neceſſary in his caſe; ſo alſo was I "never overwhelmed with grief for you who were "never loſt. But foraſmuch as we have beyond "all expectation received your Brother again, "whom we long ſince deſpaired of, and had gi- "ven up for loſt, you cannot wonder, and you "muſt allow me this unuſual tranſport; for I ſay "this your Brother was loſt and is found, was "dead and is alive again.

Thus far the μῦθος or letter of the Parable, wherein all things are ſo lively and natural, and the divine wiſdom of our Saviour hath ſo accurately deſcribed the workings of humane minds, the natural motions of all the paſſions; as that if the Parable became matter of hiſtory, it could not be otherwiſe acted. But now for the ἐπιμύθιον or application of the Parable to the matter in hand.

§. IV. In the firſt place it is certain, that by the Father of the two Sons in the myſtical ſenſe is meant God Almighty; *of whom the whole family of heaven and earth is called.* But who ſhould be the two Sons is not ſo univerſally agreed. Some of the Ancients have been of opinion, that by the Elder Son, was meant that higher order of intellectual Beings which never forfeited their Station nor revolted from their Allegiance: And by the Younger Son, the whole race of mankind under *Adam* their head; on whom (being fallen) God had ſuch compaſſion, as he did not ſhew to the Rebel Angels; for which cauſe amongſt other they are ſuppoſed to conceive hatred againſt God, and envy againſt men. But this interpretation is rejected by others, and not without great cauſe; for Theophylact. *in loc.*

in this ſame Chapter, *verſ.* 10. our Saviour tells us *the holy Angels rejoyce at the converſion of a ſinner*: And therefore they cannot be repreſented, as expoſtulating and murmuring at the favour extended towards ſuch, which is ſaid here of the Elder Brother.

S. Auſtin. Q. Evang. l. 2. Again, others have imagined that by the two Brethren were meant the *Jews* and Gentiles; the *Jews* repreſenting the Elder Brother, as having been God's ancient people; and the Gentiles the Younger, as who ran on in a long courſe of Idolatry, and eſtrangedneſs from God, till they were by the grace of God in the Goſpel, admitted into the birth-right and privileges of the *Jews*, to their great regret and indignation. And indeed beſides the opinion of the Ancients, it is not improbable in it ſelf, but that our Saviour foreſeeing the emulation which would afterwards happen between thoſe two ranks of mankind, might have reſpect to it, and deliver himſelf ſuitably thereto in this Parable; notwithſtanding that cannot be ſuppoſed to be the primary meaning, which is utterly beſides the occaſion of the diſcourſe: for as S. *Jerom* well obſerves, the controverſie was not yet riſen between *Jew* and Gentile about privileges, the latter being not yet called nor admitted to the grace of the Goſpel; but the queſtion was only, whether great and notorious ſinners (though *Jews*) ſhould be admitted to hopes of pardon upon repentance: and the Publicans in the Text, though they were Miniſters of the *Roman* Power, and reputed Inſtruments of the *Jewiſh* ſervitude, and therefore hated by them; yet were not Gentiles but a looſer ſort of *Jews*, as the ſame S. *Jerom* fully makes appear.

Therefore by the two ſons here muſt be underſtood any two men, or any two ſorts of men, (whether

ther *Jews* or *Pagans* it matters not) who as to piety and vertue have for a great while run a quite contrary courſe, but at laſt happen to meet at the ſame point of ſincere goodneſs. Namely, by the Elder Son are deſcribed thoſe, who from their younger years and minority, have been by the preventing grace of God, preſerved from the common extravagancies and corruptions of the world; and by the bleſſing of God upon pious education or otherwiſe, have been by degrees trained up, and inſenſibly led on in the ways of Religion. As our Saviour elſewhere ſaith of the Corn, that it *grows whilſt men ſleep and wake*, that is, we can ſee it doth grow, but cannot diſcern the gradual progreſs it maketh: ſo ſuch perſons become ſincerely good and run a race of vertue, though we cannot ſee where and when they ſet out, nor aſſign any date of their converſion, by reaſon the change was not ſo palpably great, nor ſo ſudden as in the converſion of notorious ſinners.

Such a perſon as we are now ſpeaking of ſeems to have been *Obadiah*, 1 *Kings* 18. 12. who ſticks not to ſay of himſelf, *I thy ſervant fear the Lord from my youth.* And ſuch another was *Timothy*, concerning whom we have the teſtimony of the Apoſtle, 2 *Tim.* 1. 5. that by the careful inſtructions of his Grandmother *Lois*, and his Mother *Eunice*, he had been from his youth principled with a ſenſe of piety and religion.

To theſe inſtances I will add for the nearneſs of matter what *Pontius Diaconus* ſaith of S. *Cyprian*, *He ſo early and preſently conceived a ſenſe of piety, that his proficiency almoſt prevented all inſtruction.* Nor can I forget what * S. *Greg. Nazianzen* hath

*Præproperâ pietatis velocitate, pænè antè cœpit perfectus eſſe quàm diſceret.* Pont. Diac. *in vit. S.* Cyprian. * Ἐκεῖνος πρὸ τῆς ἡματέρας αὐλῆς, ἦν ἡμέτερος, εἰσπολεῖ δὲ αὐτὸν ἡμῖν ὁτρόπος. Greg. Naz. *Orat.* 19.

left upon record touching his own Father, *He was* (ſaith he) *a Sheep of Chriſt's flock before he came into his fold, and a Chriſtian before he came within the Church; the probity of his temper, and ſingular vertues of his life, made him a Chriſtian as it were by anticipation.* But perhaps theſe laſt expreſſions are ſomewhat too florid and rhetorical, that which I am ſaying is plain and eaſie, that there are ſome perſons of whom the Grace of God takes early hold, and the good Spirit of God inhabiting them, not only prevents the enterprizes of the Devil, but carries them on in an even and conſtant courſe of holineſs: their Chriſtianity bearing equal date with their manhood, and reaſon and religion, like warp and woof running together, make up one web of a wiſe and vertuous life.

This is a moſt happy caſe wherever it happens, for beſides that there is no more ſweet nor beautifull thing in the whole world than the early buds of piety upon which account it is probably ſuppoſed, that our Saviour (who was far from a ſoft fondneſs of youth or admiration of external beauty) gave ſuch ſignal tokens of affection to S *John*, that he was called the beloved Diſciple. Beſides this, I ſay, it is ſo much a more comfortable thing *to eſcape the pollutions that are in the world through luſt*, by an early ingagement in a holy courſe, as it is more deſirable to eſcape ſhipwreck, than to be ſaved by a plank; or to have no wound, than to experiment the moſt ſovereign balſom: which if it work a cure, yet uſually leaves a ſcar behind. Moreover he that begins his race betimes hath all along the comfort of his progreſs and proficiency, and feels himſelf daily approaching towards his deſired end: whereas he that ſets out wrong hath the hard and uncomfortable part of going quite back

back again, and undoing all he hath done, beſides the agonies of conſcience, and the ſtrong convulſions which he muſt ſuffer, that caſts off a long ſettled and habitual courſe of ſin. To which add, that whatever diligence or zeal of God's glory a late Convert that con es into the Vineyard, as it were at the eleventh hour, may expreſs at laſt, yet it is certain he hath done God a great diſhonour heretofore: whereas he we now ſpeak of, is one that coming in at the firſt hour, labours all day in God's work, and equally carries on the affair of God's glory and his own comfort here, and ſalvation hereafter. Now all theſe things conſidered, if there ſhall be any man ſo raſh and injudicious, as notwithſtanding to preſs all men without diſtinction in order to their title to the mercies of God and hopes of Heaven, to make the ſame ſevere reflexions upon themſelves, or to ſhew the like ſenſible and diſcernible change in their lives, let them know by this unskilfulneſs of theirs, they unreaſonably miniſter trouble to the beſt and happieſt of men; and have a deſign quite contrary to that of our Saviour, who profeſſed he *came not to call the righteous but ſinners to repentance.* And in the ſeventh Verſe of this Chapter he ſpeaks of *juſt men which need no repentance*; that is, have no need to make a change of their whole courſe and begin a new, as notorious ſinners ought to do. Both which places I take to be clearly interpreted, and to the ſenſe we are aſſigning to them, by that other paſſage of our Saviour, *Jo.* 13. 10. *He that is waſhed, needeth not, ſave to waſh his feet only*: that is, he that is already ingaged in a holy courſe, and habituate to the ways of piety, hath only need to be daily cleanſed from thoſe occaſional ſoils and defilements, which the infirmity of humane nature and converſation

*V. huc ſpectantia apud* Philonem *de* Noacho, *in lib. de* Abrahamo.

verſation in the world ſuffer no Man wholly to eſcape, but not to enter upon a new ſtate, or begin a whole courſe of repentance. To which effect I underſtand thoſe words of *Origen* in his Books againſt *Celſus*, *Chriſt Jeſus* (ſaith he) *was ſent indeed a Phyſician to cure and recover ſinners, but to improve and inſtruct thoſe further in the myſteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, that were already vertuous.* I'll conclude and confirm all I have ſaid of this kind with the ſenſe of *Manaſſes*, which he expreſſes in his famous penitential prayer. *Thou, O Lord, that art the God of the juſt, haſt not appointed repentance to the juſt, as to* Abraham *and* Iſaac *and* Jacob, *&c. but thou haſt appointed repentance unto me who am a ſinner*, &c.

Ἐπέμφθη θεὸς λόγος καθὸ ὡς ἰατρὸς τοῖς ἁμαρτωλοῖς, καθὸ δὲ διδάσκαλος τοῖς ἤδη καθαροῖς.

This I take to be ſufficient for the determination who is meant by the Elder Brother, and then we cannot be much to ſeek who is denoted by the Younger; for what we have now ſaid being granted, it neceſſarily follows; that by the Younger Son, are deſcribed all ſuch Perſons as have run a dangerous risk of ſin and impiety, that have committed groſs and hainous tranſgreſſions, and continued in a ſtate of diſobedience and impenitency, after ſuch manner as the Publicans and Sinners in the Text are ſuppoſed to have done: Theſe are ſaid to forſake their Father's houſe and preſence, to miſ-ſpend their portion in riotous living, who yet at laſt being reduced to extremity, come to themſelves, turn ſerious penitents, bewail their folly, reſolve upon amendment, implore pardon, double their diligence and care for the time to come, and of old ſinners become young Saints, whereupon they are by a gracious God admitted to pardon and reconciliation, and adoption; for theſe the beſt robe is fetched out, the fatted Calf ſlain, and upon

upon their converſion as a thing utterly deſpaired of and unexpected, there is joy in Heaven, and amongſt the holy Angels. Theſe were dead in treſpaſſes and ſins, but are now quickned and revived by the grace of God; they were Strangers and Aliens from the Covenant of Grace, but now become of the houſhold of God, and heirs of eternal life.

And now theſe two points being reſolved of, we have a key by which we may eaſily open all the circumſtances of the whole Parable, ſo that it will not be neceſſary that I inſiſt longer upon a general interpretation. Nevertheleſs leſt there ſhould ſeem one difficulty not ſufficiently provided againſt, or any man ſhould yet be at a loſs, how if the Elder Brother denote ſincerely good men, it can ſtand with their character to grumble at the merciful reception of poor Penitents, as here he is repreſented to do. And moreover it may raiſe another doubt, if the Elder Brother be ſet to deſcribe men of conſtant and unblemiſhed Sanctity, how ſuch a Perſon ſhould be fit to denote the Scribes and Phariſees, who were certainly very evil and corrupt men. Unleſs a plain account can be given of theſe, it muſt follow, that either we have not hit the occaſion of the Parable, or the Parable did not anſwer to the occaſion. Wherefore to theſe I anſwer joyntly, That our Saviour the more effectually to convince theſe *Jews* that reproached and cenſured him, proceeds with them upon their own Hypotheſis; namely, taking it for granted that they were as eminently good and holy men, as they either took themſelves, or pretended to be; and that the Publicans and Sinners were indeed as bad as they eſteemed them: I mean he doth not intend to ſignify that theſe cenſorious perſons were indeed good men, for upon all occaſions (we ſee) he upbraids

braids their rottenneſs and hypocriſy; but becauſe they out of opinion of their own ſanctity and contempt of others, reproached his carriage in this matter, therefore he deſigns to ſhew them, that if that was true which is utterly falſe, and they as good men as they were extremely bad, yet upon due conſideration they ought not to blame his management of himſelf, and gracious condeſcenſion to ſinners. As if he had ſaid: "You Scribes and Phariſees wonder that inſtead of applying my ſelf to "your converſation, who are men of great note "for ſanctity and devotion, and never blemiſhed "with any great diſorder; I rather chuſe to lay "out my ſelf upon the recovery of flagitious and "deſperate ſinners: now ſee your own unreaſonableneſs in this inſtance; You will allow a Father to be more paſſionately concerned for, and "expreſs a greater joy upon the recovery of a "Loſt Son, than he uſually doth about him that "was always with him and out of danger; and if "that Son who had never departed from his Father, and ſo never given him occaſion for thoſe "change of paſſions, ſhould expoſtulate with his "Father for his affectionateneſs in ſuch a caſe, "you would in your own thoughts blame him, as "envious and undutiful. Now apply this to your "ſelves, and think as well as you can of your "ſelves, yet upon the premiſes, you will ſee no "reaſon to calumniate my endeavours of reclaiming ſinners, or my kindneſs and benignity towards them upon their repentance.

By this time I doubt not but the whole drift of the Parable is made plain and perſpicuous to an ordinary capacity. Wherefore now I proceed to handle the particular branches of it: of which there are theſe three moſt remarkable in the Parable,

rable, and which as I have already intimated, are the deſigned ſubject of the ſubſequent diſcourſe.

Firſt, we have here a graphical deſcription of the ſtate and condition of an habitual ſinner before repentance, from *verſ.* 11. to *verſ.* 17.

Secondly, a type or portraicture of true repentance and turning to God, from *verſ.* 17. to *verſ.* 20.

Thirdly, an Emblematical repreſentation of God's unſpeakable mercy in the gracious reception of ſuch penitents, from *verſ.* 20. to the end of the Chapter, but eſpecially to *verſ.* 24.

Of theſe three points I will treat in order according as the ſeries of the Parable leads me. But yet becauſe I apprehend it will be not only profitable in it ſelf, but alſo peculiarly ſubſervient to the preſent deſign, that before I apply my ſelf to a direct proſecution of the traces of the Parable, I give a ſtrict and Philoſophical account of the Nature of Sin, and the ſeveral Stations of Sinners, as which will give both light and weight, eſpecially to the firſt of the mentioned particulars, and in good meaſure to all the reſt; This therefore I will endeavour in the next immediate Chapter.

CHAP.

## CHAP. III.

### Of the Nature of Sin, and of the divers States of Sinners.

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§. I. If

§. I. IF we take juſt meaſures of the nature of ſin (at leaſt ſo far as it falls under our preſent conſideration, for it is not within the compaſs of my ſubject to treat of Original ſin,) it is thus to be Defined, namely, Sin is a voluntary breach of a known Law. Or to ſpeak more fully and diſtinctly, there are theſe three things concurrent to make man guilty, or to denominate any action of his ſinfull.

1. That by ſome act or omiſſion of his, there be a going contrary to, and violation of ſome Law in being.

2. That the Law ſo violated, be ſuch as is, or might have been known to the Offender.

3. That the Action or Omiſſion by which ſuch Law is violated, be conſented to, and the breach voluntary.

All theſe three things together in conjunction are the ingredients which make up the deadly poyſon of ſin. And for defect of due conſideration of the neceſſary concurrence of all of them to that unhappy production, it is hard to ſay whether greater Errours have enſued in Doctrine, or more Vices in practice: whether more perplexities have infeſted mens Conſciences, or more uncharitableneſs hath imbittered their Spirits. For if the firſt ingredient be left out, Sin is thereby rendred either nothing at all, or of ſo indefinite and uncertain a nature, as that looſe and profane men will laugh at it: and on the contrary good and devout perſons will never be free from ſuſpicions of it. If the ſecond be omitted, the conſequence will be, that ſevere and ſad judgments will be paſſed upon the final eſtate of the greateſt part of mankind, and therewith very unworthy reflections be made upon the

the Divine Majeſty; And if the third branch be omitted, the number of ſins will be vaſtly multiplied, but the nature and guilt thereof ſo extenuated, as that men will be tempted to be more afraid of God than of ſinning againſt him. But all this and a great deal more will better appear upon a brief explication of the particulars.

Firſt then, wherever there is ſin there is a breach of ſome Law in being: this though it be not the full and adequate notion, yet is the firſt reaſon of ſin. And accordingly we may eaſily obſerve that in moſt, if not in all Languages, the very words that are made uſe of to expreſs moral evil or ſin, do all import the breach of ſome Law or rule of action. Eſpecially the *Hebrew* Tongue (which is moſt ſignificant in this kind) hath three words moſt uſual in the caſe which we find all together, *Pſal.* 32. v. 1, 2. and all leading us directly to this notion of ſin. *Bleſſed is he whoſe Tranſgreſſion is forgiven, whoſe ſin is covered: Bleſſed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not Iniquity.* The firſt word פשע which we render *tranſgreſſion*, properly ſignifying to paſs ſet bounds or tranſgreſs prefixed Limits. The ſecond חטא which we tranſlate *ſin*, denoteth a miſſing of the aim or mark we were to have directed our ſelves towards. And the laſt of the three עון *iniquity*, implies the making of a crooked and wandring path. So that we ſee whatever kind, condition or degree of ſin it be that is ſpoken of, it is ſtill expreſſed by reſpect to ſome Law or Rule, in deviation from which it conſiſts. The like may be obſerved in the *Greek* Tongue, in the words ἀνομία, ἁμαρτία, πλάσμα, &c. and generally in other Languages.

But

But we need not inſiſt upon niceties, when that which we are ſaying is the expreſs aſſertion of two Apoſtles, S. *Paul* and S. *John*, the former telling us, *Rom.* 4. 15. *Where there is no Law, there is no Tranſgreſſion.* The other, *Ep.* 1. Chap. 3. verſ. 4. *He that ſinneth tranſgreſſeth alſo the Law: for ſin is a tranſgreſſion of the Law.*

Now for that Law which ſin is a violation of, it is threefold, (*viz.*) Either firſt *the Law of Nature* and reaſon, that is, thoſe differences of good and evil which the mind of man is of it ſelf able to collect by attentive conſideration of the nature of God, and our relation to him, the ſtate of the whole Creation, and the mutual aſpects of the ſeveral parts thereof upon each other, and upon our ſelves; (of which we ſhall have occaſion to ſpeak more hereafter.) Or ſecondly, the expreſs and poſitive declarations of the Divine will concerning things to be done or avoided by us, which is commonly called *Revelation* or *Divine Law.* Or thirdly, the inſtitutions, commands and prohibitions of ſuch men as it hath pleaſed God to inveſt with Authority (under himſelf) of obliging others, which we call *Humane Law.*

To theſe ſome would add *Cuſtom* as a fourth rule of action, becauſe they obſerve there are many caſes wherein (all the former ceaſing) wiſe and good men are wont to govern themſelves by laudable and prevailing cuſtoms; but this ſo far as it is obliging, may be reduced to Humane Law. Others alſo would add the *Law of Charity*, or of avoiding ſcandal as a fifth, but this is both provided for by the poſitive Law of God, and alſo deducible from natural principles. Therefore the three aforeſaid meaſures comprize all that which can fall under the notion of Law, and conſe-

quently every ſuch thing as is to be eſteemed a ſin muſt conſiſt in a deviation from our going croſs to either all or ſome one or other of them.

For it is evident of it ſelf that every thing is free till ſomething reſtrain and circumſcribe it, and it cannot be evil but good to make uſe of that liberty, which derogates from no other, which infringes no Authority, being retrenched by none. And it is as evident that we owe account of our ſelves and carriage only to God ultimately, forasmuch as we derive our being and all we have and are from him and him only: he therefore who gave us our being and all our powers and faculties and their reſpective accommodations, and who continually ſupports us in the exerciſe of them, may juſtly preſcribe to us, and ſet us what boundaries ſhall ſeem fit to his infinite Wiſdom.

Now there are but three ways wherein he hath impoſed any obligation or reſtraint upon us, *viz.* Either by ſuch footſteps of his Will, as the mind of man may trace in the order of the Creation, thoſe intimations of good and evil which are interwoven in the very nature and order of things, and to be obſerved by natural reaſon. Or ſecondly, by extraordinary interpoſition, expreſly dictating his mind and will to the Sons of men. Or laſtly, delegating Authority to thoſe whom his Providence hath conſtituted in Superiority, to preſcribe to us in all ſuch things as were not foreprized by the two former, *i. e.* that in all caſes where neither the Laws of Nature, nor the Divine Law were infringed, there it was his will we ſhould govern our ſelves by the Laws of men.

Theſe I ſay are all the ways God hath thought fit, and all that are imaginable of laying any obligation upon us. Therefore whereever there is

ſin,

ſin, either ſome plain dictate of Reaſon is contradicted, or ſome poſitive Law of God violated, or the Sanction of humane authority oppoſed; and where neither of theſe is done, there can be no ſin upon the forecited reaſon of the Apoſtle, *where there is no law there is no tranſgreſſion.*

Which plain truth we have thus carefully deduced principally for the prevention or remedy of two miſtakes very rife in this matter. The former is of certain honeſt and well-meaning, but timorous and ſuperſtitious perſons, who not content to approve themſelves to the aforeſaid meaſures, nor thinking it ſufficient for their ſecurity, that neither the Law of Nature, nor any expreſs either divine or humane Law diſallow their actions, are afraid of their own ſhadows, and ſuſpect ſin and danger they know not why nor whence; their heart miſgives them, when there is nothing in the caſe, but either that the thing they are about is contrary to the courſe of their Education, or forbidden by the imperious dictate of ſome perſon, to whoſe uſurped authority they have proſtituted their judgments. Now would ſuch perſons be induced to conſider, that lawful and unlawful are relative terms, and reſpect ſome definite rule or other, which muſt determine any action to be this or that; that God is well pleaſed that his Laws be obſerved, and is not ſo ſevere and rigid as to oblige us negatively, that is, that we ſhall do nothing but what he commands; that there is a great field of liberty interjacent between expreſs ſin and expreſs duty, and in that we may expatiate without offence; that all actions are good within that ſcope, and though they admit of ſuch different degrees, as that ſome may be much better than others, yet none are evil that touch not upon the bounds and limits of Law:

If, I ſay, theſe things were conſidered, which are no more than the effect of what I ſaid before, then would thoſe honeſt minds be undeceived and enfranchiſed, who for want of ſuch conſideration are put to the unhappy choice either to be diſpoiled of all liberty, or deprived of all peace; beſides that by ſuch jealouſies they tempt both themſelves and others to think hardly of God, and conſequently of that, provoke all ſuch men as are ſtrangers to Religion to nauſeate and abhor it.

The other miſtake which we here ſeek to prevent, is of thoſe that quite contrary to the former, are ſo far from thinking the three Rules of Action we laid down to be inſufficient, that they perſwade themſelves it is no great matter for Law or Rule, as if the perſwaſion of a man's own conſcience, an honeſt intention and a zeal of God were able to bear out and juſtifie an undertaking, though againſt the expreſs and literal direction of ſome Law in being. This conceit (ſtrange as it is) hath nevertheleſs had its Patrons and Proſelytes both amongſt *Jews* and Chriſtians, and been the cauſe of miſchief enough to both. Now it is true that it is within the power of Conſcience, to make that which was before indifferent in the general, to become good and laudable in particular; and contrariwiſe by its diſſent to render it evil and vicious, becauſe God having given it a judicature, its conſent is to be had in what we do; in which ſenſe, I take it, that of the Apoſtle is to be underſtood, *whatſoever is not of faith is ſin*; and for that reaſon an erring conſcience (as I ſhall ſhew by and by) is alſo ſome mitigation of a miſcarriage in practice. But it is far from the prerogative of being able to legitimate any Action prohibited by any of the aforeſaid rules, for it is but a Judge not a Law, and

and muſt be governed by the meaſures forelaid. Or if we allow too, that the light of conſcience is one of thoſe meaſures, (as we do) yet muſt it not bear down both the other; that is, it is only a Law, and juſtifies an action when neither divine nor humane Laws have reſtrained it, and not elſe. Wherefore upon the whole matter it is apparent, that the three Rules aforeſaid in conjunction make up the ſtandard of good and evil; every thing is a ſin that goes contrary to any of them, and nothing is ſo, that doth not.

§. II. 2. But ſecondly, to render any action of ours culpable, it is not ſufficient that ſome Law in being be broken, unleſs the Law be alſo promulged; *i.e.* ſuch as is or may be known, for otherwiſe in effect it is no Law. And that government would juſtly be accounted arbitrary and tyrannical, and the Sovereign rather thought to lie at catch for the penalty than to deſire juſt obedience who ſhall impute that for a fault, which he had not given ſufficient caution againſt by a plain declaration of his will and pleaſure. For *non eſſe & non apparere æquiparantur in Jure, that which cannot appear is in Laws all one as if it were not at all*; becauſe an unknown Law can have no influence upon thoſe it ſhould concern, neither directing them what to do, nor forewarning what to avoid; neither giving notice of their duty, nor their danger; and conſequently works neither upon their reaſon, nor their paſſion, and therefore not at all.

It is true that all Laws have not the ſame way and manner of publication, for even amongſt men ſeveral Nations have their ſeveral and peculiar forms of doing it. The old *Romans* by Tables hung up in the Market, and places of publick congreſs; ſome have done the ſame thing by the voice

of a publick Herald, or by the ſound of a Trumpet, *&c.* but however they differed in the circumſtance, they all agreed in the thing, that Laws were not perfect and obliging till they were promulged. And ſo it is with the Laws of God Almighty, he never expects that men ſhould govern themſelves by the ſecret decrees of Heaven, nor leaves them to gueſs at the tranſactions in his Cabinet-Counſel, he firſt publiſhes his Law, and then requires conformity to it; though that in divers manners, as it ſeemed beſt to his divine Wiſdom. Sometimes he expreſt himſelf by an audible voice from Heaven, wherein the Angels were employed as his Miniſters, namely, when he gave his Laws upon Mount *Sinai*: other times by inſpiration of Prophets and Holy Men, and making them the Interpreters of his mind to the world. When to give the more full aſſurance that it was he that ſent and inſtructed them, he was wont alſo to ſend along with them ſome miraculous power or other, as his Credential Letters under his privy Signet. But moſt gloriouſly of all did he proclaim his mind, when he ſent his Son into the world, whoſe every circumſtance from the miracles of his Birth to the glories of his Reſurrection and Aſcenſion, ſufficiently proclaimed him the *Meſſias*, the Meſſenger of the Covenant.

And for the Law of Nature, theſe, though by ſome perverſe Men they have been denied to have the Nature of Laws obligatory, becauſe they have not had the like ſolemnity of publication, as others have had, yet * foraſmuch as theſe have either been written upon the fleſhly Tables of men's hearts, where all that will look inward may read them, or rather, (as I have intimated already) are ingraven and inſerted into the very nature of things,

* *Touching this matter, let the Learned Reader conſult D.* Cumberland *de* Leg. Nat.

things, and texture of the Univerſe, where whoſoever hath not unmanned himſelf, and debauched his reaſon, may be able to diſcover them. And beſides they have manifeſtly the ſanction of rewards and puniſhments, in the conſtant experience of good and evil, attending the obſervation and contempt of them reſpectively, upon which accounts they muſt needs ſeem to all honeſt and unprejudiced minds, ſufficiently promulged.

So that conſtantly ſome way or other according as it ſeemed beſt to him, God hath always been pleaſed to make his mind ſufficiently and certainly known to all thoſe upon whom he intended it ſhould have the force and obligation of a Law, and he never required obedience otherwiſe than in proportion to ſuch manifeſtation. Accordingly we obſerve, that when he had given Laws to the People of the *Jews*, and proclaimed them very gloriouſly and ſolemnly as aforeſaid; yet in regard ſuch proclamation could not certainly reach to all other Nations, (for that as well as for other reaſons,) he did not exact of any other people conformity to thoſe inſtitutions, nor judged them thereby. So the Apoſtle aſſures us, Rom. 2. 12. *Such as have ſinned without the Law, ſhall periſh without the Law; and as many as have ſinned under the Law ſhall be judged by the Law.*

And it is further very remarkable, that even the Goſpel it ſelf, which was (what the Religion of the *Jews* was not, namely) an Inſtitution fitted for all Countries, Nations, and Ages; and which therefore our Lord *Chriſt* took care by his Apoſtles as his Heralds to proclaim all the World over: This Goſpel I ſay, till it was fully publiſhed, and until Men had time given them to conſider well of it, and to overcome their prejudices againſt it,

made a favourable interpretation of Men's unbelief. This I take to be the import of thoſe words of our Saviour, *Joh.* 9. 39, 41. *For judgment am I come into the world, that they that ſee not might ſee; and that they that ſee, might be made blind. If ye were blind, ye ſhould have no ſin: but now ye ſay, we ſee, therefore your ſin remaineth.* And to the ſame purpoſe, John 15. 22. *If I had not come, and ſpoken amongſt them, they had not had ſin: but now they have no cloak for their ſin.* And of the truth of this, St. *Paul* himſelf was a great inſtance, for ſo he tells us, 1 Tim. 1. 13. *I obtained mercy, becauſe I did it ignorantly in unbelief, q. d.* I lay under mighty prejudices by reaſon of my Education in the ſtiff way of a Phariſee; and it required a great ſincerity to be willing to liſten to new propoſals, a huge ſagacity to be able to ſee through thoſe miſts that were caſt before my eyes, and a moſt generous reſolution to break through theſe and all other difficulties; in conſideration whereof, God was pleaſed to make abatements of the guilt of my unbelief in proportion to the temptations I had thereto. It is indeed both a well known, and as well received a Maxim, *Ignorantia Juris non excuſat*, that it is no excuſe of a fault to ſay *non putâram*, I did not know the Law; becauſe when a Law is once promulged, every Man is bound to take notice of it, and it can be imputed to nothing elſe but ſupine and affected ignorance, if he ſhall then continue ignorant. Notwithſtanding upon the ſelf-ſame ſuppoſition it ſeems to be granted, that where the caſe is otherwiſe, that is, where the Law not being ſufficiently publiſhed, cannot be known, by an honeſt diligence, there ignorance is no fault, becauſe indeed (as I ſaid) there the Law is no Law.

Thoſe,

Thoſe who conſider not this point, muſt needs be tempted to paſs very diſmal and damnatory Sentences againſt the greateſt part of Mankind, and conſequently cannot avoid very hard thoughts of God: for the prevention of both which great evils, as alſo to confirm what hath been now ſaid, there is nothing more uſeful than to ſtudy well the Parable of our Saviour concerning the Talents, *Matt.* 25. 14. by the due conſideration whereof, we ſhall amongſt other inſtructions be led into the apprehenſion, that God proceeds not with men Arithmetically, but Geometrically, or that the vertue or vice which God rewards or puniſhes conſiſts not in *puncto*, but is eſtimated according to Men's diligence or neglect of improving thoſe means and advantages which have been afforded them. For as there is the ſame proportion between 1. and 2. as between 5. and 10. ſo he that having but half (ſuppoſe) of the advantages which another Man enjoyed, proves to be as good as that other, is really much better. Whereas he that having double the advantages, is not better than he whom he this way ſo much excels, is not good at all, nor will be acceptable to God when he ſhall be weighed in the balance of the Sanctuary. Becauſe whoſoever had been furniſhed with true internal probity of mind, and was of an obedient temper, and had a ſincere love of goodneſs, would moſt certainly have advanced in the meaſures of vertue proportionably to the opportunities he had of ſo doing; *i. e.* in the words of our Saviour, *He that was faithful in little, would have been ſo in much.* And on the contrary, he that under great advantages hath not been proportionable in the improvements of his temper and life, it may truly be ſaid of ſuch a Man, God hath been very

good

good to him, but he for his part is not good at all. Which conſideration will be of uſe, both to make us more wary in pronouncing concerning the final eſtate of other Men, and alſo enable us to paſs a better judgment of our actions and ſtate; foraſmuch as it hereby appears, that it is not the bare conformity or inconformity of our actions to a Law or Rule from whence their value or their guilt ariſes, but reſpect is had to the knowledge or knowableneſs of that Rule. And ſo we have the ſecond ingredient of ſin.

§. III. 3. Laſtly, to render ſin compleat and perfectly criminal, it is neither enough that for the matter of it, it be againſt ſome Law, nor that ſuch Law be known, but the act or omiſſion muſt be voluntary; that is, not what a man was overborn into by ſome fatal neceſſity, or compelled to by the force of ſome violent impreſſion, not what he could neither help nor hinder; but what was ſo far ſubject to his own free choice, that he willingly did what he did, and could have done otherwiſe, or omitted doing if he had been ſo pleaſed. For whatſoever is not of this nature is not properly an humane act, and therefore cannot involve him in the guilt of ſin, no more than the effects and productions of natural cauſes can be eſteemed vicious. And though men have underſtanding which thoſe other cauſes are deſtitute of, yet that being only the *Criterion* or Teſt of truth and falſhood, not of moral good and evil, therefore virtue and vice are not imputable to the underſtanding but to the will, which being the Helm of the ſoul determines all its motions, and accordingly is accountable for them. For the more clear underſtanding of which, and of whatſoever I may have occaſion to ſay hereafter touching this matter, I think

I think it uſeful to precaution theſe three things.

1. That it is not to be doubted, but that notwithſtanding the liberty which the will of man hath to chuſe evil, yet it is not ſo uncontrollable in its elections but that it is ſubject to the power of God's grace to be checked and controlled by him at his pleaſure; for the divine wiſdom may well be ſuppoſed to have a thouſand ways of diverting man from his courſe without offering any direct violence to his faculties, ſome of which might eaſily be inſtanced if it were needful; nay there is no reaſon to queſtion, but divine omnipotence may (if it ſo pleaſe) irreſiſtibly incline, move, and determine it to that which is good, of which ſome inſtances alſo may be aſſigned, though theſe laſt muſt be expected to be very rare, partly becauſe that ordinarily to invert the nature of things, and put his creation out of courſe, makes not ſo much for his wiſdom as it may ſeem to do for the demonſtration of his power, and partly alſo becauſe thus taking away the natural and evident reaſon of rewards and puniſhments, would obſcure that juſtice which he deſigns to glorifie. But this is all that is aſſerted at preſent, that whatſoever God may pleaſe to do either for the hindering of evil, or the effecting of good, he doth not neceſſarily determine or over-rule the wills of men to that which is evil, but therein they are left to themſelves.

*V. Hales de homine, cap. 1 p. 39.*

*V. S. Theodoret. περὶ φύσεως ἀνθρώπου, Serm. 5.*

2. As ſome excellently good men may arrive at ſuch a perfection, ſuch a new nature, and ſuch habits of goodneſs, as that it ſhall be morally impoſſible they ſhould chuſe evil; (of which I ſhall treat more at large hereafter) ſo on the other ſide, it is neither impoſſible nor unuſual for evil men to forfeit the freedom of their wills, ſo far as to bring not only a biaſs upon their ſpirits, but a kind of

fatal propenſion to evil, and render it in a manner neceſſary that they ſin. Namely, by long cuſtom and inveterate habits of ſin, they loſe the *æquilibrium* and balance of their ſouls, and thenceforth wholly incline to evil. But foraſmuch as this (wherever it comes to paſs) is only the effect of their own choice, it contradicts not what we are aſſerting; for whereas the habits were voluntarily contracted, the effects are interpretably ſo too. And therefore as we noted before under the former Head, that the reaſon why ignorance of the Law did not excuſe a default, was becauſe the Law being once ſufficiently promulged, ſuch ignorance muſt needs be ſupine and affected, that is, voluntary; for the ſame reaſon ſuch men as we now ſpeak of, cannot excuſe their miſcarriages, by laying the blame upon their preſent neceſſity or impotency; becauſe having firſt cripled themſelves voluntarily, their actual halting afterwards is ſo too, in as much as it was free in its cauſes, though not in the ſpecial inſtances.

*Vid. S. Baſil. Homil. 31. περὶ τοῦ αὐτεξουσίου. in initio.*

3. But that which is principally to be conſidered, is, that there is a vaſt difference betwixt the power or capacity of doing good, or of avoiding evil, or willing ſo to do on the one ſide, and of doing or willing that which is evil on the other. For to the former of theſe there is a neceſſity of the concurrence of divine grace and aſſiſtance, which no man can deny without falling in with the Pelagians; and therefore when a man is ſaid to have it in his power to do good, that which is true is no more but this, that ſuch grace and aſſiſtance

He that will conſult *Grot. in Matt.* 19.

17. will find an heap of teſtimonies of Fathers and Philoſophers to this purpoſe, collected to his hand

To which if he pleaſe, he may add *Iſidor. Peluſiot. lib.* 4. *Ep.* 171.

which

which is neceſſary, is always ready and at hand; which joyntly concludes for God's goodneſs and man's liberty, making the actions of man puniſhable when he doth evil, becauſe grace was ready to have aſſiſted him otherwiſe if he had not refuſed it; and rewardable when he doth well, becauſe when he might have refuſed God's help he did not; and in ſhort gives God the glory of whatever is good, becauſe it could not be done without him; and leaves no man without encouragement of his diligence and induſtry, becauſe God will not be wanting to him. But for the latter, namely, the doing or willing that which is evil, there is nothing more requiſite, but the will it ſelf (provided God extraordinary interpoſe not to hinder it.)

This Doctrine was followed and imbraced by the firſt reformers of this Church of *England*, as appears by the Book entituled, *The Erudition of a Chriſtian Man*, particularly in the expoſition of the Lord's Prayer; for which, *vid. Burnet's Hiſt. of Refor. part.* 1. *lib.* 3. *p.* 291.

Theſe things premiſed, I am not aware of the leaſt ſuſpicion that can lie againſt what we are aſſerting; namely, that a neceſſary and principal ingredient of ſin, is the voluntarineſs thereof; and of the truth hereof, the proofs are as many and pregnant, as the abſurdities of the contrary are manifeſt. For what ground can there be imaginable, why God ſhould uſe exhortations and perſwaſions, reproofs and expoſtulations with men for ſin, if it were not in their power to withſtand it? wherefore ſhould he upbraid them for their wilfulneſs, condemn them for ſtubbornneſs, and after all ſeverely puniſh them for what they could not help? If the inſupportable weight of neceſſity lies upon them, or ſome latent and irreſiſtible cauſe overpower them, they are patients rather than agents, and deſerve pity rather than blame or puniſhment.

*Nec peccatum nec rectè factum imputari cuiquam juſtè poteſt qui nil fecerit propriâ voluntate. Eſt igitur & peccatum & rectè factum in libero voluntatis arbitrio.* S. Auguſtin *Reſp ad* 83. *Q.*

It

Ὁ βιαζόμενος οὐδὲν ἧττον ἐκεῖ μένει ὅθεν ἀπελθεῖν βιάζεται Porphyr. *de abst. lib.* 1.

It was a discreet saying of *Porphyry*, *A man that is moved by force only, is properly enough said to be where he was, as if he had not been moved at all.* For whatsoever seeming alteration necessity and violence may make for the present, when once the force is over, every thing returns to its own nature again, and is what it was before; but without doubt in all moral consideration, Man is reasonably to be interpreted to be in that state all the while, where he was by his own choice, and would have continued had not force expulsed him. And *Seneca* said very well, *Necessity is the great Sanctuary of humane infirmity; which whosoever can lay claim to, obtains protection, for it perfectly excuses all the faults it commits.* Whatever can justly be pretended to be necessary, if it be evil, is a natural one and not a moral, and an unhappiness or punishment rather than a sin. So the *Romans* judged also in a well known case, *It is the free mind which only is capable of guilt, dull matter and body, whatsoever is passive cannot be blamed, because they cannot chuse.*

*Magnum humanæ imbecillitatis patrocinium necessitas, quæ quicquid cogit, excusat.* Sen. *Mentem peccare non corpus: & unde consilium abfuerit peccatum abesse.*

Neither is it possible any Man should repent of doing what he could not but do, or of omitting to do what was never in his power to effect; no more than that he cannot fly like a Bird, or move like an Angel. What remorse, or shame, or trouble of conscience can there be, that a Man is not another kind of creature than he was made, that he did what was natural and necessary for him to do, or for such things as may indeed be said to be done by him, and yet not be his act, that is, the act of a Man, because he could not do otherwise? God hath set up Conscience as his Vicegerent, and a Judge within us; but as we said before, it is not so absolute as to judge without a Law, so neither can it be so unjust and absurd, as to condemn and

torture

torture without conviction of guilt. And though there is no doubt of the prerogative of God to impoſe what Laws he pleaſes; yet we have the manifold ſecurity of his goodneſs, wiſdom and juſtice, beſides his truth and faithfulneſs, that he will not oppreſs us with his ſoveraignty, but in all his diſpenſations will conſider our frame and circumſtances, and remember that we are *but duſt and aſhes.*

In ſhort, if there be any ſo abſurd, as to affirm ſin to be any way neceſſary, to all other abſurdities, 1. They bring in the ſurly paradox of the *Stoicks*, and make all ſins equal, repreſenting the moſt pitiable infirmities of humane nature, equal to the moſt diſſolute enormities: 2. They infinitely increaſe the number of ſins, but take off the weight and guilt, render it little more than a notion, and teach Men to have no horrid apprehenſions of it: 3. They excuſe Man, and lay the fault (if there be any) ſomewhere elſe: but wherever that is, it will revolve at laſt upon God bleſſed for ever.

§. IV. But I perſwade my ſelf I need not proceed further in exaggerating this matter; wherefore both to cloſe and to confirm what I have ſaid, I will only ſubjoin the Authority of the Apoſtle S. *James*, in that remarkable paſſage of his Epiſtle, *Chap.* 1. *verſ.* 13, 14, 15, wherein he deſcribes the conception, formation, growth, perfection and nativity of ſin. The words are theſe; *Let not any man ſay when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God is not tempted of evil, neither tempteth he any man. But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own luſt, and inticed. Then when luſt hath conceived, it bringeth forth ſin; and ſin when it is finiſhed, bringeth forth Death.* Upon which, let

let me crave leave to use the liberty of this less strict Paraphrase. As if he had said, "Let no "man imagine, that God by any act of his pro- "vidence, provokes or prompts, or much less puts "any necessity upon Men to sin; for as he by the "perfection of his divine nature is infinitely above "the reach of any temptation to act it himself, "so it is so contrary to him that he abhors it "wherever it is, and therefore can by no means "contribute to it, nor have any hand in the pro- "duction of it. And though several of his designs "suppose it, and his providence be exercised about "the regulation of it; yet this is no argument "that he either ordained it, or effects it. For his "wisdom is sufficient to enable him to see through "all the Series of causes, and to foreknow what "they are pregnant with, and what they will in "their respective times be delivered of, without "peremptory determination of them thereunto. "And again, although it be true, that sin could "not have been in the world unless he had "thought fit to permit it, yet it is never the "more by him, since it takes its rise from no- "thing else, but the unhappy use of that great "blessing and privilege of liberty which he "endowed rational creatures withal. Would "you then understand more particularly the ge- "neration of this *sponte nascent?* take it thus.

"First then you are to know, that the "great and wise Creatour of all things for "weighty reasons thought fit to create Mankind "of a middle nature and condition, betwixt pure- "ly spiritual beings, and the inferiour world of "meer animal and natural, making him participate "of both; and agreeably hereunto, endowed him "both with intellectual and sensitive powers.

The

" The former whereof, namely the intellectual,
" were to enable him to ſerve his Creator, to ren-
" der him capable of noble and excellent delights,
" and that he might by them order and govern
" the inferiour and ſenſitive faculties. And theſe
" latter were given him, partly to relax his mind
" by a moderate and ſeaſonable condeſcenſion to
" the ſweetneſs of the ſenſes, but principally to
" be a field and exerciſe for thoſe active, vigorous
" and noble capacities of the mind.

" Again, Secondly, you are to conſider, that
" as that wiſe and benign Majeſty never made any
" thing but what was good in its kind, and hap-
" py according to its proportion; ſo eſpecially in
" this part of his workmanſhip, he prepared and
" apportioned objects ſutable to the aforeſaid dif-
" ferent capacities, and allowed the uſe and exer-
" ciſe of both, only with this remarkable diffe-
" rence, that the objects and entertainments of ſenſe
" were little and narrow, but preſent at hand;
" thoſe of the intellectual powers great, but out
" of view and at diſtance: by which means it
" became ſomewhat difficult, but not impoſſible,
" for thoſe higher faculties to maintain that au-
" thority over the inferiour which he deſigned
" them for, and expected from them.

" 3. Then further to afford thoſe higher powers
" opportunity to ſhew themſelves, he retrenches
" in ſome meaſure the liberty of the ſenſitive fa-
" culties, forbidding ſome kinds of enjoyments
" of their proper objects; in which caſe thoſe
" ſtrong, but unjudging faculties, being reſtrained
" in thoſe things which were natural to them,
" and wherein they found a quick reliſh and de-
" light, have (as it cannot be expected but they
" ſhould) a proneneſs and inclination to ſuch

" things, notwithſtanding the divine prohibition. " This is that which the Apoſtle calls ἐπιθυμία, " *Luſt*; and which I think the Schoolmen mean " by *motus primo primi*; and although ſin takes its " riſe hence, yet hitherto there is no ſin; for did " the higher faculties now quit themſelves as they " might and ought, and in conſideration of the " reverence due to the divine Majeſty, and thoſe " boundaries he hath ſet, give check to theſe in- " clinations, all were well.

*Difficile, quin potiùs impoſſibile, perturbationum initiis carere quempiam, quas ſignificantius Græci* προπαθείας *vocant.* S. Hieron. Ep. ad Demetr.

" But now begins the miſchief; For whilſt " thoſe objects of ſenſe continually preſent them- " ſelves to, and court their proper powers, and " reaſon, not ſtepping in to diſturb and forbid the " parly, that proneneſs or connaturalneſs (of which " we ſpake) quickly ſtarts up into the deſire of ſuch " things as God has forbidden, in which conſiſts " the firſt *conception* of ſin: and hitherto the high- " er faculties are guilty as acceſſories only, becauſe " they did not interpoſe to hinder theſe beginnings. " But then in the next place, phancy and imagi- " nation being employed about the object ſo deſi- " red, do in that manner paint and ſet it out, or " by a kind of Chymiſtry ſo wonderfully ſublime " and heighten it, that the value is mightily rai- " ſed, the deſire inflamed, and in deſpight of all " danger muſt not be denied. Thus the *Embryo* " is cheriſhed in the womb of the ſoul and gathers " ſtrength. And now it was high time for the " higher powers to correct their firſt error, to " rally their forces, to call in all the aids of Re- " ligion, and ſet in vigorouſly, and ſtop the fur- " ther progreſs of the miſchief. But reaſon ei- " ther laid aſleep by the fumes of ſenſe forgers the " danger,

" danger, and lets fall its ſcepter; or thoſe higher " powers, either prevented in their preparations, " or corrupted by the charms of pleaſure, con- " nive at the diſorder, and making but a faint and " ſuperficial reſiſtance, the ſecond error becomes " worſe than the firſt, and ſin goes on and grows " ripe for the birth: till at laſt paſſion ſtill ſwel- " ling, and reaſon yielding, conſents as it were to " its own depoſition, and luſt getting the conſent " of the will, hath the reins put into its hands, " and ſo all the members of the body are ſubject " to its command, and then is ſin brought forth " perfect and conſummate.

§. 5. Thus I have as briefly and plainly as I could, opened the nature of ſin; by the tenour of which diſcourſe we may gain this double advantage, firſt, to underſtand what it is which fills ſin with that malignity, as to make it the juſt hate of God and man; and ſecondly, to be able to diſtinguiſh the ſeveral degrees of guilt, or principal aggravations of ſin. For touching the former of theſe, we may eaſily perceive by what has been ſaid, that guilt is not a meer arbitrary ſtamp that God ſets upon actions, nor puniſhment an effect of harſhneſs or ſeverity, foraſmuch as all that which God puts under that character, and puniſhes as ſuch, is in the firſt place a contradiction to the divine will, and to that law and order of things he hath conſtituted in the world; and ſecondly, is a contempt alſo of the divine wiſdom, in that the ſinner either turns his back upon the proclaimed Laws of Heaven by affected ignorance, or takes himſelf to be lawleſs, and confronts God Almighty; and laſtly, there is wilfulneſs and contumacy in it too; for whereas it pleaſed God out of ſpecial

favour, to endow men with freedom, to the intent they might ſerve him both more honourably and more chearfully, they in ſinning perverſly turn this privilege againſt their Maker.

And for the ſecond of theſe, though ſin admits of many heads of abatement or aggravation; as namely, either from the matter of it, or the Law it violates, whether natural, divine or humane; or from the clearneſs or dimneſs of the light, under which men ſin, the greatneſs or littleneſs of the temptation which they have to offend, and ſeveral other conſiderations of that kind which it is not uneaſie to ſpecifie: yet the moſt general and the moſt uſeful diſtinction is taken from that which I reckoned, as the third and laſt ingredient of ſin; namely, from the conſent of the will in the commiſſion of it; for ſo if we obſerve we ſhall find, that both in the eſteem of Scripture and Conſcience, the degrees of guilt are principally reckoned in proportion to the imperfectneſs or fulneſs of its conſent or concurrence to any vitious action. Inſomuch that herein that great diſtinction of ſin into infirmity and preſumption hath its foundation; namely, when there is but an imperfect compliance of the will, the miſcarriage is of the former kind; but when it fully yields and conſents, it is a ſin with a high hand. Which being a matter wherein the peace of men's Conſciences here, and their eternal welfare hereafter is concerned, I ſhall not ſuſpect it will be unacceptable to the Reader, that I ſpeak a little more fully to it.

[7] *In omni injuſtitia permultum intereſt, utrum perturbatione aliqua animi, quæ plerumque brevis eſt, & ad tempus; an conſulto & cogitato fiat injuria.* Cic. Offic. lib. 1.

Huc refer quæ inſignia habentur apud S. *Theodoret.* Orat. 12. de virtute activa, circa finem.

And firſt, to reckon up the moſt common inſtances of ſins of infirmity, I take them to be properly

perly ſuch as theſe following. (*viz.*) The firſt beginnings of ſin not purſued, when a man unadviſedly enters the confines of evil, but recovers and withdraws himſelf as ſoon as he conſiders the conſequents, and apprehends the miſchief and danger. Or when by the nearneſs of the allurements of ſenſe, and the quick motion of bodily paſſions, he begins to take fire; or when the extraordinarineſs of the temptation ſurpriſed him, or the mighty prevalence of example overbore him beyond his courſe and intention, before he well underſtood where he was; and he had no time to recollect himſelf, and to call in the aids of Reaſon and Religion. Perhaps a mighty fear may hurry a man to ſome degree of indecency, or an huge advantage may ſway him a little aſide, till he can ſo far recover himſelf, as maturely to conſider; and then to ſet himſelf upright, he bends himſelf quite the other way. Now in all theſe caſes, where there was no room for deliberation, there could be no perfect judgment; and conſequently but an imperfect conſent.

*Inquirenti mihi in me quædam vitia apparent retecta & in aperto poſita, quæ manu prenderem, quædam obſcuriora & in receſſu, quædam non continua, ſed ex intervallis redeuntia: quæ vel moleſtiſſima dixerim, ut hoſtes vagos, & ex occaſione aſſilientes, per quos neutrum licet,*

*nec tanquam in bello paratum eſſe, nec tanquam in pace ſecurum,* &c. apud Senec. de tranquil. animi, cap. 1.

Again, whileſt a man is bending himſelf with all his might againſt ſome one extreme which he knows to be evil, and therefore carefully declines; he may perhaps in deteſtation of that, incline too much to the other; or whilſt a man endeavours diligently to carry on both the affairs of this life, and the concerns of Religion too; it may happen that the ſolicitude and cares of the former, may ſometimes unſeaſonably crowd in, and diſturb him

*Affectus sunt motus animi improbabiles, subiti & concitati, qui frequentes neglecti, fecere morbum. Sicut distillatio una, nec adhuc in morem adducta, tussim facit, assidua & vetus Phthisin.* Senec. ep. 75.

in the latter. Nay once more, through the infirmity of memory, compared with the multiplicity of affairs, which a wise and good man's care extends to, it may not infrequently fall out, that such a person for the present forgets, or omits some duty of Religion. Now it cannot be said that any of these cases are perfectly involuntary, because it was not impossible, but that extraordinary diligence and watchfulness might have provided against them, nevertheless they are not deliberate sins, nor was there any full consent of the will to them: as is evident both by what we have said already, and also by this, that such persons we speak of very quickly feel remorse for them, their hearts smite them upon the first reflection upon what hath past, and they presently recover themselves, and double their watch and guard, where they have thus found themselves overtaken. These therefore and all other of the nature of these, are properly called sins of infirmity.

But now on the other side, when the matter of fact is notorious and palpable, that it can admit of no dispute, whether it be evil or no; when a Man is not surprized, but makes his election; doth not insensibly slip awry whilst he was in his right way, but takes a wrong course; is not overborn by an huge fear, but is allured by the pleasures of sense; when he hath time to consider, and yet resolves upon that which is forbidden him; here is little or nothing to extenuate the fact, or mitigate his guilt; it is a voluntary, and therefore a presumptuous sin. Such a distinction as this *David* seems to make, *Psal.* 19. 12, 13. when he prays that

that he *may underſtand his errours*, to the intent that with holy *Job*, where *he had done iniquity, he might do ſo no more*, but earneſtly begs that he may *be kept from preſumptuous ſins*; *i. e.* from ſuch voluntary and wilful miſcarriages as we have but now ſpoken of: ſo, ſaith he, *ſhall I be innocent and free from the great tranſgreſſion.* For though ſins of infirmity in the moſt proper ſenſe are not without guilt, at leaſt if God ſhould proceed in rigour with Men, yet in conſideration of the goodneſs of God, together with the evident pitiableneſs of their own circumſtances, they leave no horrour upon the mind, no ſtain or ill mark upon the perſon, much leſs a ſcar or a maim; but the other, beſides their great guilt, either terribly afflict, or lay waſt and ſtupify the Conſcience; they harden the heart, break the powers of the ſoul, and quench the Spirit of God; as we ſhall have occaſion to ſpeak more at large hereafter.

At preſent I think it may be very pertinent to obſerve, that whereas S. *John*, *Ep.* 1. *Chap.* 3. *verſe* 4. ſeems to give a brief and compendious deſcription of ſin in theſe words, Ἡ ἁμαρτία ἐστὶν ἡ ἀνομία, which we render, *Sin is a tranſgreſſion of the Law*; it is not altogether improbable, but that the Apoſtle intended to expreſs ſomething more than is commonly underſtood by thoſe words in *Engliſh*; for beſides that it ſeems a flat ſaying, *he that ſinneth tranſgreſſeth the Law, for Sin is a tranſgreſſion of the Law*; it is noted moreover by learned men, that the Apoſtle calls not ſin, παραβασία, which had been the moſt proper word to denote a meer breach or tranſgreſſion of the Law, but uſes the word ἀνομία, which ſignifies a great deal more; namely, lawleſneſs and diſſoluteneſs, the living without, or caſting off the yoke of the Law; for ſo we find it

elſewhere uſed in Scripture, particularly, 1 *Tim.* 1. 9. where we have ἄνομοι καὶ ἀνυπότακτοι, *lawleſs and diſobedient*, or ungovernable joyned together. And thus the phraſe of the Apoſtle before us will import, not ſo much the meer matter of ſin, (*viz.*) the violation of a Law, but the aggravation of it as a preſumptuous ſin; namely, the wilfulneſs and ſtubbornneſs of the ſinner. And if this gloſs may be allowed, we ſhall with much eaſe be able to underſtand a following paſſage in this Apoſtle, which hath not a little exerciſed the heads of Divines, nor leſs perplexed the Conſciences of many ſerious perſons. (*Viz.*) *verſ.* 9. of this *Chapter* he writes thus, *He that is born of God doth not commit ſin, for his ſeed remaineth in him; and he cannot ſin, becauſe he is born of God.* Now if we take ſin ſtrictly and rigorouſly here, for every thing that is contrary to the perfection of the Divine Law, then it will be abſolutely neceſſary, that by the phraſe, *He that is born of God*, we can underſtand none but our Saviour himſelf; (which is altogether beſides the buſineſs) foraſmuch as he only was without ſin in that ſenſe: but if we take the phraſe in the latitude before intimated; that is, for voluntary, wilful, and deliberate ſins; then the ſenſe is both eaſie and comfortable; namely, that the Man who is truly a Chriſtian, having not only the profeſſion, but the new nature, temper and ſpirit of the Goſpel; though being a Man, and ſo incompaſſed with temptations and difficulties, as every one is in this world, he cannot avoid all ſurreptions; yet the powerful principles of Chriſtianity ſettled in his heart will not fail to preſerve him (at leaſt ordinarily) from rebellion and wilful diſobedience.

And this way of interpreting theſe and the like paſſages of the New Teſtament, is ſtrongly countenanced

nanced by what we find, *Luke* 1. 16. where it is ſaid of *Zachary* and *Elizabeth*, that they were *both of them righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameleſs.* That is, they were ſincerely good and vertuous perſons, their hearts were principled with the fear and love of God; and though they were not without the errours and failings incident to humanity, yet they ſtrictly made Conſcience of their duty, and did not deliberately depart from the way of God's commandments. And that paſſage concerning *David*, 1 *King.* 15. 5. ſeems ſufficient to put the matter out of doubt, where it is ſaid, *David did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, and turned not aſide from any thing he commanded him all the days of his life, ſave only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite.* Notwithſtanding the Scripture reckons up ſeveral failings of *David*; his paſſion for *Abſalom*, his numbring the People, his approaching too near the Lord's Anointed when he cut off the skirt of *Saul*'s Garment, (for which his heart ſmote him) his deſpondency of mind and miſtruſts that he ſhould one day fall by the hand of *Saul*, his rage againſt *Nabal*, &c. But in regard theſe were but imperfectly voluntary, therefore they make no blot in his Character. But in the matter of *Uriah* the fact was horrible, there was time for deliberation, the uſe of cunning and contrivance, and therefore full conſent. Wherefore this was quite of another conſideration from all the reſt, and left ſuch a ſtain upon him, as required many tears and prayers, and a very ſerious and ſignal repentance to cleanſe him from.

§. VI. Thus much I had thought ſufficient for the clearing the diſtinction between ſins of infirmity

mity and presumption; but I cannot but take notice of a mistake equally common and dangerous, which where-ever it takes place, doth not only render all we have hitherto said useless, but is of fatal consequence to the souls of Men. It is to this effect: When Men are about the commission of some great and enormous sin, it is not unusual for them to find some reluctancy and abhorrence within themselves. Now for the sake of this they think, that although they yield to the temptation, and commit the sin; yet it will not be esteemed altogether a voluntary transgression, but will admit of great abatements, by reason of such combate and conflict which they found in themselves. And to this purpose they apply that passage of the Apostle, Rom. 7. 15. *That which I do I allow not, for what I would that do I not, but what I would not that I do.* And that which follows also, *verse* 17. *So then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.* But to remove so dangerous a mistake, it would be well consider'd in the first place, that however some have learned to call such a reluctancy as aforesaid, by the specious name of the combate between the flesh and spirit, or the regenerate and unregenerate part, as the same Men love to speak; it is certainly nothing else, but meerly some remains of natural Conscience in men, and is to be found in some measure in the very worst of men; that is, in all but those whose Consciences are seared, and utterly insensible. It is the very nature of Conscience it self, which is nothing else but a kind of internal sense of good and evil implanted by God in the nature of man; and a Man may more easily destroy any of his outward senses, than quite extinguish this. The Apostle takes notice of it in the *Romans*, *Chap.* 2. *vers.* 15. whose vi-

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ces were yet ſo notorious, as that they were utterly out of capacity of being accounted regenerate men. Indeed, if a Man found in himſelf ſo quick a ſenſe of his duty, and were ſo tender of all degrees of evil, that his Conſcience not only checkt, but called him off, and reſtrained him upon the firſt appearance or approaches of ſin; this (as I have intimated before) would be a good ſign of regeneration; and ſuch beginnings of evil ſo reſiſted, will not be imputed as wilfull tranſgreſſions.

But when a mans Conſcience not only checks him, but he goes on and commits the ſin, the beſt that can be made of it, is only that it is not a ſeared Conſcience; and yet ſuch a Man is in a fair way to that alſo; for as a part of the body by being often rubbed and hurt, grows at laſt callous and inſenſible, ſo the Conſcience being often reſiſted in its intimations, and ſtifled and over-born by the fury of luſt and paſſion, grows at laſt ſtupid and dead. So the Apoſtle tells us, *Rom.* 1. 28. becauſe they liked not to retain God in their minds he gave them up to vain imaginations, and becauſe they gave themſelves to ſenſuality, he gave them up to unnatural luſts; and ſo by degrees *εἰς ἀδόκιμον νοῦν, to a reprobate mind*; to a ſtate of ſtupidity, a ſpirit of injudiciouſneſs to loſe the feeling of good and evil. And in the mean time it is ſo far from extenuating the guilt of a man's ſin, that his heart ſmote him for it; that on the contrary, it is a great aggravation of his preſumption, that he went on to the commiſſion of it notwithſtanding. If a Man could ſay he did not ſo well know his duty as he ſhould, and therefore his Conſcience not being rightly informed, did not give him warning of it; or that he was in a hurry, and could not

not consider; or confesses that his rashness and precipitancy; these are some mitigations, for (as S. *Clemens* well pronounces) *That which is involuntary is sudden*; and where a Man cannot deliberate, he scarcely consents. But when the case is such, that a Man must acknowledge he knew what he did, he thought of it and condemned it, and yet did it; this surely is an aggravation, if any thing in the world be so. *It is* (saith a generous Heathen, *Plutarch* by name,) *a most unmanly and brutish thing for a Man that knows what he should do, softly and effeminately to give himself up to the swing of intemperate passions.* In short, if when a Man (confessing the truth) must say, he had reason against what he did, but confronted it; his Conscience shamed him, but he resolved to be shameless; he had weapons in his hand to resist temptation, but he cast them down and yielded: (all which is implied, when a Man saith his Conscience smote him when he went about a sin, but nevertheless he persisted and committed it;) I say, if this be not a voluntary sin, there is no such thing incident to mankind: For it is plain that here is no aversation of the will towards the sin, nor so much as an imperfect concurrence of it; for the choice of the soul runs clear and full for the commission, only it happens that the Judgment and Conscience put some rubs in its way, that make it go more uneasily, but it goes notwithstanding.

Τὸ μὲν ἀκούσιον αἰφνίδιον. Clem. Alex. *pædag.* l. 1. c. 2.

Θηριῶδες μὲν καὶ ἄλογον καὶ οἰκτρὸν εἰδότα τὸ βέλτιον, ὑπὸ τοῦ χείρονος, ὑπ' ἀκρασίας καὶ μαλακίας ἄγεσθαι.

§ VII. Thus much concerning the guilt or malignity of sin in the general: Now briefly for the various states and mansions of sinners: Which we shall the more easily understand, if we first consider the several degrees of vertue; or so many higher and lower capacities as there are of being good and holy. And I know not where to find these more

more exactly reckoned up and deſcribed, than by S. *Clement* of *Alexandria*, who makes four ſtations of perfection. 1. *Not to ſin at all, Which,* (ſaith he) *is the felicity of the divine Nature, and to be ſure not the condition of any meer man in this world.* 2. *Not to commit any wilful or voluntary ſin, which is the attainment of the perfect man,* or true *Gnoſtick,* as he uſes to ſpeak. 3. *Rarely to be guilty of inadvertency, or involuntary Lapſes; which is the condition of a good proficient in religion.* 4. And Laſtly, *When a man hath ſinned, to recover himſelf early by repentance, and not lie under the guilt, nor much leſs grow into a habit of ſin.* Which loweſt degree, though it be vaſtly different from every of the former; yet it is tolerable, and acceptable, through the mercy of God, as we ſhall ſee anon.

Ἄριστον μὲν οὖν τὸ μηδ' ὅλως ἐξαμαρτάνειν κατὰ μηδένα τρόπον ὃ δὲ φαμὲν εἶναι θεοῦ. Δεύτερον δὲ μηδενὸς τῶν κατὰ γνώμην ἐφάπτεσθαί ποτε ἀδικημάτων ὅπερ οἰκεῖον σοφοῦ. Τρίτον μὴ πάνυ πολλοῖς τῶν ἀκουσίων περιπεσεῖν, ὅπερ ἴδιον παιδαγωγουμένου εὐγενοῦς. Τὸ μεθ' ἐπιμήκιστον ἐνδιατρίψαι τοῖς ἁμαρτήμασιν, τελευταῖον τετάχθω. Clem. Alex. *pædag. lib.* 1. To this purpoſe *Seneca* alſo diſcourſes very excellently in his 75 Epiſtle, where he makes three ſtages or ſtations of Virtue.

Now in ſome proportion to this diſcourſe, we will ſuppoſe four ſtations or degrees of wickedneſs: 1. Such as do nothing but ſin, which we only mention for method ſake, for as we are certain, *non datur ſummum malum,* or that there is no being abſolutely evil, (as the *Manichees* imagined) ſo it is very unqueſtionable whether the very Devil himſelf do nothing but what is evil; but it is out of all queſtion with me, that the worſt and moſt vitiouſly inclined men do ſome good. And for thoſe that can aſſert the moſt vertuous actions of unregenerate men to be expreſs ſins, they may pretend what Patrons they will of their opinion; but I am ſure neither Scripture nor Reaſon will countenance

tenance it: for though it be true that the beſt actions of ſuch men are not acceptable as the conditions of eternal life, becauſe they are disjoined from habitual ſanctification and true holineſs; yet that they are not therefore ſins, will ſufficiently appear by what we have ſaid not long ſince in the deſcription of the nature of ſin. Neither becauſe they are defective in ſome circumſtances do they ceaſe to be good, or become ſins; for then the beſt performances of the beſt men in this world would be ſins too, becauſe they are alſo defective in circumſtances.

2. The ſecond (or rather firſt) rank of ſinners, conſiſts of ſuch as live in the habitual practice of great and enormous ſins, whether of one kind or of many; I confeſs at the firſt ſight, one would think theſe ſhould be divided into two claſſes, whereof the firſt ſhould be thoſe profligate wretches and ſons of *Belial*, who perfectly abandon themſelves to the Temptation of the Devil, and the fury of their own luſts; and *add drunkenneſs to thirſt*, as the Scripture expreſſeth it; or run from one kind of ſin to another with a kind of greedineſs, as if (were it poſſible) they loved evil for its own ſake, or had a ſpite both at God and their own Souls. And the ſecond ſhould be thoſe more reſerved and cautious ſinners, who perhaps may carry it very demurely in many reſpects, but maintain ſome boſom ſin which is as dear to them as their right eye, and as neceſſary as their right hand; and this they hope God will indulge them, *Oh it is a little one, and their ſouls ſhall live.* I ſay I ſhould in civility have provided theſe a form by themſelves, and not ſet them with the open and ſcandalous ſinners, but that I obſerve God makes no difference between them: *His ſervants ye are* (ſaith the

the Apoſtle) *to whom ye obey*; and it is no matter whether a man have many Maſters or one, he is equally a ſlave that is led captive either way. And ſo S. *James* in that moſt remarkable paſſage, Chap. 2. verſ. 10. *Whoſoever ſhall keep the whole Law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all.* Of which ſeeming Paradox he gives account in the next verſ. *For he that ſaid, Do not commit adultery, ſaid alſo, Do not kill,* &c. *i. e.* The reverence of every branch of God's Law, is built upon the conſideration of his ſovereignty and right to preſcribe to us: which he impeaches whoſoever diſpenſes with himſelf in the habitual breach of any one of his commands. For whatever particular he chooſes to tranſgreſs in, he derogates from the authority of the whole. Beſides, it is to be conſidered, that all ſins cannot ſtand together; ſome ſins are as repugnant and contradictory to each other, as all are to vertue; and moreover, *non omnis fert omnia tellus*, it may be not the humour, or intereſt, or not ſuitable to the conſtitution of ſome man to act ſome ſin; when yet it is neither love of vertue, nor the fear of God which makes him abſtain from it. Theſe therefore are juſtly joyned together; namely, all ſuch as live in the habitual practice of one or more notorious ſins.

3. A third rank are ſuch as, though they live not in the habit, yet are guilty of the act of ſome very great and flagitious crime: for there are ſome ſins very deadly, even in ſingle acts; as either containing a complication of many wickedneſſes together, as ſacrilege, adultery, ſedition; or ſuch as can never be revoked, nor amends be made for them, as taking away a man's life; or never repeated nor repented

All Commiſſions of this high nature, imply a perfect choice of the will, and ſo are of the ſame deadly nature with an habit; being the ſame thing in principle, which that is in product and concluſion.

repented of, as to murther a man's ſelf, and ſeveral others. Now theſe being of ſo deadly a nature, every man that hath any ſenſe of vertue or care of his own ſoul, ought ever to be ſufficiently guarded againſt them, and at utter defiance of them; and he that can be ſo careleſs as to be found guilty of any ſuch, betrays the great Atheiſm and ſecurity of his heart. And for this reaſon the miſcarriage of *David*, in the buſineſs of *Bathſheba* and *Uriah*, lays ſuch an horrible blot upon him; and needed all that repentance whereof we have the footſteps in the 51. *Pſalm.*

4. The fourth and laſt rank are they that avoid both the habit and the act of greater ſins, yet allow themſelves in the frequent commiſſion of leſſer, and perſevere in them without repentance. By leſſer ſins I mean, both ſuch as I reckoned up before under the name of infirmities, and more particularly ſuch as theſe following. When a man dares not give himſelf up to beaſtly ſenſuality, yet will too much humour and careſs his body in meats, and drinks, and pleaſures; or will not ſteal and cozen, but will be covetous, and have his heart too much upon the world; that dares not caſt off the duties of Religion, but will indulge himſelf to be remiſs and flat in them; and ſeveral of this nature too eaſie to be obſerved. Now theſe kinds of ſins are the more dangerous, in that partly our Conſciences not being preſently ſtartled at them as at greater crimes, we more eaſily admit them, or they inſenſibly ſteal upon us: from whence it comes to paſs that they become frequent, and ſo ariſe to a great number, and ſeem to equal that way, what they have not in weight. Theſe therefore if they be ſuffered to paſs unregarded, grow to a greater danger, ſince no danger is little

little when once it is eſteemed ſo: and beſides, though theſe may paſs for inadvertencies when they are once or rarely committed; yet it muſt be a vicious neglect of our ſelves, when they are frequent and ordinary, foraſmuch as all ſincere vertue is awakened to greater diligence by every ſenſible declenſion: to which add eſpecially, that whatſoever ſin, and how little ſoever it be, if not repented of when it is come to our knowledge, is by that means become a voluntary tranſgreſſion increaſing its guilt *ex poſt facto*. Theſe are the principal ſtations of ſin, or the ſeveral ways upon which a man is denominated a ſinner in the language of Scripture, and of wiſe men.

But to the end we may render this important point as clear as we can, and now alſo come more directly to the Parable before us; we will take notice of the Pſalmiſt *David*'s diſtribution of ſinners into a threefold *Claſſis*; Pſal. 1. verſ. 1. *Bleſſed is the man that walketh not in the counſel of the ungodly, nor ſtandeth in the way of ſinners, nor ſitteth in the ſeat of the ſcornful.*

Firſt, ſome he calls ungodly, (ἀσεβεῖς the LXXII. render it,) ſuch as having not a true ſenſe of piety in them, ſtand fair for any temptation. The *Hebrew* רשעים, properly ſignifies turbulent, malecontent, and ſeditious perſons, fit for any miſchief. And ſuch is the caſe of thoſe that have not God before their eyes, nor the principles of Religion in their hearts; they are ready to liſt themſelves for the Devil's ſervice; therefore the Pſalmiſt deſcribeth them as *ſtanding in counſel*, as it were deliberating a defection.

The ſecond rank he calls by the name of *Sinners*: that is actual tranſgreſſors; ſuch as are not only diſpoſed for the Devil's ſervice; by the looſe-

neſs of their principles, and the turbulency of their ſpirits, their vicious inclination, but have actually entred into it, have ingaged themſelves in a way and courſe of ſin, and therefore are ſaid to *ſtand in the way: i. e.* not only reſolved upon their courſe, but proceeding and making progreſs from ſin to ſin towards deſtruction.

3. The third ſort he calls *Scorners*, thoſe that have not only debauched the light of their own Conſcience, and all other principles of vertue, but have extinguiſhed them too; and therefore being now arrived at the pinnacle of prophaneneſs, laugh at that which they formerly feared, and endeavour to make the reaſons of Religion as ridiculous and contemptible to others, as they are inſignificant with themſelves. Theſe are in the higheſt form of wickedneſs, and therefore are ſaid to *ſit in the ſeat of Scorners*, as being ſettled in their way, and very ſeldom or never reclaimed.

And this brings me to the Prodigal Son, as we have him deſcribed in the Parable: He is gone beyond the firſt form, being not in the deliberative, but in the actual purſuit of a ſinful courſe; and yet he is not arrived at *the ſeat of the Scorner*, but he is *in the way of Sinners*. And we are now to diſcover and trace him in that his way and courſe of ſin; which we ſhall endeavour to do, guiding our ſelves by the thread of the Parable.

S. *Luke*

S. *Luke* 15. *verſ.* 12, 13, 14, 15, 16.

12. *The younger Son ſaid to his Father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided to them his living.*

13. *And not many days after, the younger Son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far Country, and there waſted his ſubſtance with riotous living.*

14. *And when he had ſpent all, there aroſe a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.*

15. *And he went and joyned himſelf to a Citizen of that Countrey; and he ſent him into his fields to feed ſwine.*

16. *And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the ſwine did eat: and no man gave unto him.*

## CHAP. IV.

### The Prodigal's Risk; or Sin's Progreſs.

### The CONTENTS.

§. I. *Pride is ordinarily the firſt beginning of a ſinful courſe, proved by the fall of Angels, of Men, the temptation of our Saviour and his firſt doctrine, in order to the recovery of men.*

§. II. *The ſecond inſtance of defection, is, caſting off the ſenſe of God, and a Providence, and laying aſide the duties of worſhip; the intimate conjunction and dependence of piety and morality upon each other mutually.*

§. III. *Habitual ſin not only brings a guilt, but deſtroys the powers of the ſoul: what talents God beſtows upon the generality of mankind: of free will, natural reaſon, conſcience, providence, and divine illumination; and how vice imbezils them all.*

§. IV. *When men have abuſed their powers and talents, they become ſlaves of the Devil; how ſuch a condition lays them both open to him, and fits them for his ſervice.*

§. V. *Sin is extreme drudgery in all the inſtances thereof.*

§. VI. *And makes very bad returns, not affording any tolerable ſatisfaction when a man hath yielded to it; particularly the unſatisfactorineſs of bodily pleaſure, worldly riches, and applauſe.*

§. VII. *The ſad and deſolate condition of an habitual ſinner at laſt, when the pleaſures and profits of ſin fail and deſert him.*

IN the words of our Saviour, now recited, we may plainly obſerve this to be the method of the Prodigal's ruine.

1. *He is impatient of the reſtraints of his Fathers Family, and not being content with his proviſion, he therefore deſires to be at his own diſpoſal; which having obtain'd,*

2. *Then he departs from his Fathers houſe, and goes into a far Country.*

3. *Being there, he miſpends his ſtock in riotous living.*

4. *Having miſpent his own ſtock, and being thereby reduced to want, he is conſtrained to become a ſlave or ſervant.*

5. *In his ſervice he is put to extreme drudgery, being appointed to keep ſwine.*

6. *Be-*

6. *Beſides the baſeneſs of his employment, he is uſed with great ſeverity and hardſhip, forced to feed on huſks.*

7. *So deplorably dealt with, as not to have huſks enough to ſupply nature, and therefore is ready to periſh.*

And theſe ſeven ſteps are as plainly diſcernible in the courſe of the myſtical Prodigal, as of the literal; I mean, in him that goes on in a way of ſin againſt God, as in him that rebells againſt an earthly Parent: as ſhall be now made appear in particular.

Firſt, the *præludium* to the Son's defection, is his impatience of the reſtraint of his Father's, family and government; together with an opinion of his own ſufficiency to diſpoſe of and ſhift for himſelf. Thereupon he comes to his Father *Father give me the portion*, &c. as if he had ſaid, "I "am now come to years of diſcretion, and doubt "not but I am able to govern my ſelf and manage "my own affairs; ſet me out therefore my ſhare, "that I may but have whereupon to employ my "ſelf, and grant me my liberty, and I ſhall give "you no further trouble. Under the notion of a "Son, make me not always a boy; give me but "leave to be a man once, and I fear not to acquit "my ſelf as ſuch. And thus it is with the ſinner, pride, elation of mind, and ſelf-confidence make the firſt ſtep to his ruine. *Pride goes before a fall*, (ſaith *Solomon*) *and a high mind before deſtruction.* It intoxicates the underſtanding, and makes the mind giddy and inconſiderate; it ſuffers a man to take no ſober counſel, to hearken to nothing but what ſooths and flatters him; and thence he becomes raſh, precipitant, and adventurous; it permits

mits him not to take true measures of himself, but over-rates his deserts, and over-values his capacity.

And thus being blown up with a conceit of himself, he presently grows male-content with his condition; and finding himself restrained, the proud waves of his passion rage and swell against all that bounds and checks them, and this rage casts up mire and dirt, wherewith divine providence it self is bespattered: as if either God knew not what was good for such a man, or envied his felicity or grudged his satisfaction; or at least pleased himself in putting unnecessary restraints upon him. He finds his condition not to his mind, and not being willing to bring his mind to that, he is tempted to run upon adventures, and to make experiments, that he may give his mind full scope and contentment. Hence it is (as I observed before) that the wicked in the sacred Language are called *Reshagnim*, unquiet, seditious and turbulent: pride and discontent prompting them to unruly attempts against God, disputing his prerogative, and breaking down the Laws and Boundaries he hath settled. Either such men conceit God hath not been benign enough, in the provisions of his care and providence; or the instances of duty are too many and too hard, and too great intrenchments made upon humane liberty thereby; that God consulted his own prerogative in the constitution of his Laws rather than his wisdom, and the reason of things, and good of his Creatures; that man might be more happy if he were left to his own counsels. Would God permit them, they think nothing so sweet, as *meram haurire libertatem, pure and unconfined liberty*; that all restraint is intolerable slavery to a generous mind; and imagi-

imagining there muſt needs be ſome admirable delight in thoſe things God forbids, have thereupon a mighty mind and huge *impetus* upon them, to try thoſe things above all other, whatever come of it. Such kind of mutinous thoughts, ſuch jealouſies and ſuſpicions are the immediate iſſue of pride, and the ſeminalities of all rebellion againſt God.

It is the current opinion of Divines, that it was only this height of pride which ruined the Apoſtate Angels: for indeed, it is not eaſily imaginable what elſe ſhould do it, in regard they being (before their Fall) bright intellectual Beings, no cloud of ignorance could probably ſo overwhelm them, as to betray them to that fatal miſcarriage: and being alſo pure ſpiritual Subſtances, they lay under no corporeal allurements. It ſeems therefore neceſſary to conclude, that an overweening reflection upon their own height, fooled them into that preſumption to forget themſelves, and to vie with the Almighty. And this ſeems to be plainly enough glanced at by the Prophet, when he deſcribes the fall of proud *Sennacherib*; Iſa. 14. 12, 13, 14. *How art thou faln from heaven, O Lucifer, ſon of the morning? —— For thou haſt ſaid in thy heart, I will aſcend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the ſtars of God: —— I will be like the moſt High*, &c.

And undoubtedly this was the ruine of our firſt Parents, when mankind firſt turned Prodigal. God had dealt moſt liberally and benignly with them, as a gracious Father; he brought not them into the world, till he had furniſhed it like a large houſe, with all things neceſſary for their accommodation and delight; night and day were diſtinguiſhed, ſea and land ſeparated, the earth bleſſed, a Pa-

*Eccleſiaſtic.* 10, 12, 13. Pride is the beginning of Sin, &c.

a Paradiſe planted with all delicacies; and then he brings this his younger Son, Man, as to a plentiful Table of moſt delightful entertainments. Beſides this, he put all inferiour Creatures in ſubjection to him, as to their young Lord and Maſter; nay, makes that higher order of glorious Spirits, the Angels to miniſter to him, and keep watch about him; and above all placed him in his own eye, under the light of his countenance, deſigned him for yet greater and unſpeakable felicities, as his favourite and darling.

Now if after all this, it had pleaſed God to have put ſomewhat a ſevere reſtraint upon him, it ought juſtly to have ſeemed eaſie and reaſonable, being ſweetned by ſo great obligations. But the Divine Majeſty, to ſhew that in this alſo he remembred the kindneſs of a Father, makes his Laws and Government as gentle as his Favours were great: for in the midſt of an huge indulgence, and that large ſcope of all the Trees in the Garden, he laid an interdict but upon one, ſaying, *Of all the Trees in the Garden you may freely eat, ſave only the tree of knowledge of good and evil in the midſt of the Garden; of that ye ſhall not eat leſt ye die.* Who could now think any thing ſhould become a temptation ſtrong enough in this caſe to debauch mankind? Notwithſtanding here the Serpent finds occaſion to ſet Pride on work, and to raiſe a diſcontent; and firſt he begins thus, *Gen.* 3. 1. *Hath God ſaid*, &c. *q. d.* "Is it not a miſtake that you are forbidden that Fruit? was "that the meaning of the Almighty? poſſibly "your gracious Creator had no ſuch intention; "for why ſhould you be reſtrained in this? why "not left perfectly to your own election? have not "you faculties to chooſe, and deſires to gratifie?

"why

" why ſhould they be curbed or denied? ſure he " never made a power which was not to come in- " to act, nor a capacity that was not to be ſatis- " fied: nay, this one abridgment deſpoils you " perfectly of your liberty; law and freedom are " incompatible; you are not uſed like Sons, if " you be thus chained up. And what neceſſity is " there to ſet ſuch a fence about that one Tree a- " bove all the reſt? is it to exerciſe authority ar- " bitrarily over you, or to tempt your patience? " or rather, is there not ſome great good which " he knows in that fruit, and envies you the par- " ticipation of? why ſhould not you that were " made in his Image, be like Gods in this alſo, " knowing good and evil? After this manner, the old enemy of God and man tempers his poiſons; partly ſeeming to doubt of the meaning of the command, partly inſinuating ſuſpicions of God's goodneſs, but principally blowing them up with pride and ſelf-conceit; which whileſt they ſwell withall, they break to pieces, and thus fell our firſt Parents.

And the ſame Tempter, both knowing now the nature of man, and encouraged alſo with this ſucceſs, attempts the ſecond *Adam, Chriſt Jeſus*, after the ſame manner, *Matt.* 4. for though it be true, (which is commonly obſerved) that the Devil was put to it, to try all his artifices upon our Saviour, and to aſſail him both by the luſts of the fleſh, the luſt of the eye, and the pride of life; yet if we carefully conſider, we ſhall find, that the effort of ruining him by pride and vain-glory, was that which he principally truſted to and aimed at in all the temptations; but more conſpicuouſly in the two former of them; for ſo *verſ.* 3. when finding him an hungred, he begins thus: *If thou be the Son of God, command*

*command that these ſtones be made bread.* Our Saviour came not long ſince from his Baptiſm, and then as we read in the laſt verſe of the foregoing Chapter, a voice came to him from Heaven, ſaying, *This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleaſed.* Of which the Devil endeavouring to make his advantage, addreſſes himſelf to him, *q. d.* "If "God own thee as his Son, (as he pretends to do) "let him do ſomething prodigious and pompous "that may give remarkable teſtimony to it: uſe "thy intereſt in him for ſome ſignal miracle, eſpe- "cially to ſupply thy neceſſity now thou art hun- "gry; for certainly he will rather do that, than "ſuffer his beloved Son to famiſh. Ordinary men "muſt depend upon common providence, but ſure "you may expect ſomething more ſignal and wor- "thy of that relation, if it be true, that you are "the Son of God. No (ſaith our Saviour) *Man "lives not by bread only*, &c. If I am the Son of "God, as I am aſſured I am; I muſt ſo much "the more be at my Father's diſpoſal, and not "preſcribe to him. He hath ſeveral ways to ſup- "ply my neceſſity, and I will leave the particular "manner of it to his election. Then the Devil taketh him, and ſets him upon a Pinnacle of the Temples, and urges him, *If thou be the Son of God, caſt thy ſelf down, for it is written, He ſhall give his angels charge over thee*, &c. *q. d.* "To be the "Son of God, and to have it ſet off with no pomp "nor illuſtrious circumſtance, is a very mean thing, "unworthy of you, and uſeleſs to you. Aſſure "your ſelf, if he own you in that quality and re- "lation, he will interpoſe between you and the "greateſt danger you can incurr; and by ſome "ſuch experiment you ſhall draw the eyes of all "men upon you. Both this and the former at-

tack

tack are like to that of his Brethren, Jo. 7. 4. *If thou do theſe things, ſhew thy ſelf to the world, q. d.* Conſult thy fame and reputation, aggrandize thy ſelf by ſome magnificent circumſtance or other. *But* (ſaith our Saviour) *it is written, Thou ſhalt not tempt the Lord thy God, i. e.* "I am not to "require other proofs of God's power or provi- "dence over me, than he thinks fit to give; I muſt "not thruſt my ſelf upon danger, but when he "caſts me upon it, then I may aſſure my ſelf of "his interpoſition for my ſafety.

Now ſince this temptation to pride was the engine with which the firſt *Adam* was ruined, and the ſecond *Adam* aſſaulted; there can be little reaſon to doubt, but it is ſo alſo with the generality of men. And albeit the more viſible and immediate motives to ſome ſins may be profit or pleaſure, yet that which is the firſt wheel, and ſets all on work, is (as I have hinted) an arrogant opinion of our own worth or wiſdom, and derogation from the Divine Wiſdom or Juſtice in the frame of his Laws, and methods of his providence: as if he had not conſulted ſo well the conveniency of our natures, but that we could provide better for our ſelves than he hath done, if we were permitted to be our own carvers; from whence proceeds an impatience of his Government, and an inclination to rebell, and caſt off his yoke; as it were eaſie to make appear in all the inſtances of ſin, whether intemperance, fornication, injuſtice, or any the like: but that I think it needleſs in ſo plain a caſe.

But there is one thing I cannot omit to obſerve in further confirmation of this point; namely, that our Saviour when he came into the world to reſtore mankind, knowing well their diſeaſe, (like a wiſe Phyſician of Souls) finds it neceſſary to cure them

them by the contrary: therefore in the firſt place, he preſcribes to them a profound humility, as the moſt ſovereign Antidote againſt ſin, and the only principle of ſtability in virtue; he I ſay, conſidering they had fallen by pride, lays the foundation of their recovery in lowlineſs of ſpirit; injoyning that men ſubmit their own reaſonings to the wiſdom of God, and by faith depend upon him. And declaring that thoſe who will enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, or receive his religion, muſt do it as little children; that is, muſt come to it without pride or prejudice, and be ready to believe what he dictates to them, without diſpute or diffidence: and in ſhort, muſt deny themſelves and follow him. Which one leſſon if we throughly learn, we cut off all the Avenues of Satan, and everlaſtingly ſecure our ſelves againſt all temptation to Apoſtaſie from Religion and rebelling againſt God.

2. The ſecond inſtance of the Son's defection, is his departure from his Father. *He gathers all together, and takes his journey into a far Country.* Whereas the Elder Son always abides with his Father, this Youngſter, as he deſired not to be at his Father's proviſion, ſo he was equally unwilling to be under his eye, and the awe of his preſence: the inſpection of a Father would check his freedom, and reſtrain him in the full ſwing of pleaſure he deſigned to take. Home was an homely thing, dull and tedious to him; but a foreign Country would gratifie his curioſity, and miniſter ſome new delights to him. Beſides, there he ſhould be without controle, accountable to no body, which was the very thing his pride had made moſt valuable with him.

Now

Now that he had obtained what he deſired, his portion and his liberty, he valued not the comfort of his Father's countenance; nor needed his counſel, nor ſet by his bleſſing: for indeed, he intended ſo to live, as that he could not hope for it.

Thus the Prodigal Son, and every habitual ſinner treads in his ſteps. *Longinqua Regio*, (ſaith S. *Auſtin*, *Q. Evan.* 2. *c.* 33.) is *oblivio Dei*: by the far Country is meant forgetfulneſs of God. And, ſaith S. *Jerom*, *to depart from God is not local*, (for God is every-where preſent) *but to be alienated in our minds and affections from him.* Agreeably to which in the 73. *Pſal.* v. 26. where we read, *They that forſake the Lord ſhall periſh*, the vulgar *Latin* ſtrictly following the *Hebrew*, hath it, *qui elongant ſe à Deo, thoſe that put themſelves as far off from God as they can.* And ſo holy *Job*, chap 21. 14. notes it to be the humor of prophane and profligate perſons, to *ſay to the Almighty, Depart from us, we deſire not the knowledge of thy way.* For it is manifeſt that as the ſenſe of God is the great ſupport and comfort of all good men in trouble, their great animation and encouragement in all good duties, and of mighty efficacy upon them to preſerve them from all temptation to evil; ſo it is equally the dread and torture of all wicked men, and that which if it doth not check and reſtrain their wickedneſs, will be ſure to deprive them of the pleaſure of it. Wherefore when they cannot hinder that obſervant Majeſty from overlooking them, they are forced for their own quiet to be ſo abſurd, as to put the groſſeſt gullery upon themſelves, and content themſelves with the ſottiſh ſecurity, or turning away their eyes from beholding him.

*Sciendum eſt non locorum diſtantiâ, ſed affectu nos eſſe cum Deo, vel ab eo recedere.* S. Hieron. ep. 146.

Thus

Thus *Adam* when he had ſinned hid himſelf in the Garden from the preſence of the Lord; for not only the Majeſty, Power and Juſtice of God, ſtrike a terrour to a guilty Conſcience, but the very contemplation of ſuch purity and perfection, ſhames and reproaches it. Nor is the apprehenſion of God only troubleſome to the offender after he hath committed ſin, but it is able to blaſt the very Embryo, to nip it in the bud, to diſturb the deliberations, and to be ſure defeats much of the pleaſure of conception. For if the preſence of a grave and vertuous man carries that awe, as that the ſinner is rendred impotent to his purpoſes, as if he were under a charm, (the truth of which we ſee confirmed by frequent experience) how much more muſt needs the thought of an omni-preſent Majeſty, an all-ſeeing Eye, a holy and righteous Judge, cool the heats, abate the courage, and ſtop the career of a ſinner? To which purpoſe it is the obſervation of ſeveral Learned men upon that paſſage of the Pſalmiſt, Pſal. 14. 1. *The fool hath ſaid in his heart there is no God.* They conceive, That it might as well, and as conſiſtently with the Original be rendred, *The fool hath ſaid in his heart,* &c. *i. e.* Wicked men (to the intent that they might go on the more comfortably, and uncontrolledly in their ſins,) would fain perſwade themſelves there is no God.

But to ſpeak a little more cloſely and particularly to this matter; foraſmuch as I noted even now from S. *Jerome*, that God being an infinite Majeſty, we can neither approach him, nor depart from him ſtrictly and locally: there are therefore theſe three ways, by which (according to the language of the Holy Scripture) we can come near to God; (*viz.*) either 1. by acts of immediate worſhip, as

prayer

prayer and praiſes, and the like; or 2. by living under a quick ſenſe of his providence; or 3. by yielding obedience to his commands: which three things in conjunction make up the whole nature of true Piety and Religion. And in reſpect of theſe the Holy men of old, ſuch as *Enoch*, *Noah*, *Abraham*, &c. are ſaid to have *walked with God*, That is, they framed themſelves to obedience to all his commands; they compoſed themſelves to a ſubmiſſion unto and compliance with, his providential diſpenſations; and (to the intent that they might be aſſiſted and animated in both thoſe) they conſtantly addreſſed themſelves to him, by acts of worſhip for his influence and bleſſing. And again, on the other ſide, thoſe evil men who are ſaid to depart from God were ſuch as either caſt off the yoke of his obedience, or lived without a ſenſe of his ſuperintendence, or laid aſide the care of his worſhip. And which is further obſervable, theſe three are hardly to be found ſeparate from one another, becauſe of the reciprocal influence they have upon each other.

For as in the former Triad, or inſtances of piety, whoſoever lives under a ſenſe of a providence, will endeavour to propitiate the Divine Majeſty to himſelf, by all worſhip and dutiful obſervance, and he that makes Conſcience of that cannot ordinarily be ſo abſurd, as to hope for the favour of a Wiſe and Holy Majeſty, by the meer importunity of his devotions, without Conſcience of obeying his commands; with reſpect to which it was well ſaid by a pious Man in way of advice, *Leave not off praying to God, for either praying will make thee ſinning, or continuing to ſin, will make thee deſiſt praying.* Again, he that worſhips and obeys a God, moſt certainly lives under a ſenſe of him; for otherwiſe he could

give

give no account to himſelf, why he ſhould put himſelf to the trouble of Worſhip, and the care of Obedience.

And then for the other Triad, or the three inſtances of impiety, he that lives wickedly, will in time loſe all ſenſe of a Providence, and conſequently all Conſcience of the duties of Worſhip: and on the other ſide, he that extinguiſhes either the belief of a providence, or (in a fair way to it) caſts off all care of Religious Worſhip, will not fail to run riot in his life, when he hath rid himſelf of thoſe awfull principles that did curb and reſtrain him: of the truth of all which we have a memorable example, *Gen.* 4. *Cain* had betrayed a great remiſneſs in Religion, by the careleſneſs of his Sacrifice; whereas *Abel*, who believed firmly in God, thinking nothing too good for his ſervice, brought of the fatteſt and beſt of his flock to God: *Cain* thought any thing would ſerve turn, and accordingly carried away the tokens of God's diſpleaſure and diſdain; but *verſ.* 8. he invites his Brother *Abel* into the field; where, as the *Samaritan* verſion intimates, ſome diſcourſe paſſed between them: and the *Jeruſalem Tergum* tells us particularly, that *Cain* ſtiffly denied a providence, which *Abel* as ſtrenuouſly aſſerted; and this doctrine of *Cain* was very agreeable to his negligent worſhip before, and his execrable practice after: for from this denial of a providence, he preſently proceeds to the murder of his Brother; and not long after that, *verſ.* 16. we read *Cain went out from the preſence of the Lord*: he now agreeably to thoſe principles, and conſequently of ſuch villainous practices, caſt off, renounced, and defied Religion. And the text further adds, he went *and ſojourned in the Land of Nod*, which, who ſo liſted to interpret allegori-

allegorically, would very agreeably to the ſeries of the preſent diſcourſe ſay, meant that he vagrant-like, wandred on in a courſe of diſſoluteneſs, having now loſt all card and compaſs to direct him.

But what need we farther evidence in ſo plain a caſe, to which our own experience, and the obſervation of all the world gives teſtimony: for what is it that encourages any man in a generous undertaking where the exerciſe of vertue is attended with hazard and difficulty, with labour and trouble, with patience and ſelf-denial, but the belief of a providence? what bears him up, that the privacy of the fact abates not his edge, nor the tediouſneſs of accompliſhment wearies out his endeavours, nor the oppoſition quails his ſpirit, but only this, that he ſees him that is inviſible, and having God before him, thinks himſelf upon the moſt ample Theatre, and is ſure of ſucceſs and reward. And what is there that keeps alive this ſenſe of God and providence, that neither Atheiſtical ſuggeſtions debauch his Principles, nor multitude of ill examples cool his heat, and corrupt his reſolution, but his approaches to God by exerciſe of devotion, whereby he refreſhes the worthy notions of his mind, and hath them as it were new engraven, and made more legible upon the tables of his heart? He goes by the duties of Religion like *Moſes* into the Mount of God; and returns with the Tables of God's Law written a freſh by the finger of God. Such a man is aſhamed of ſin, and diſdains every ungenerous action, coming newly from the preſence of God, the approaches of ſuch a glory diffuſe ſome rays upon him, and his face ſhines as the ſame *Moſes*'s did upon the like occaſion. In ſhort, he cannot

without great violence to himſelf condeſcend to entertain the Devil into his boſome, which is yet warm with that divine Gueſt the Holy Ghoſt. Contrariwiſe, take a Man that lives without a ſenſe of God, and he hath no care of, nor value for himſelf; he hath not a mind large enough for any generous deſign, he is poor ſpirited, hurried by every fear, baffled by every danger, ſurprized and carried away by every temptation. The vigorous notions of God are either extinct by the profaneneſs of his life, or languiſh by the neglect of religious duties: there is no Angel-Guardian about his Soul, no generous diſdain of ſin in his heart, he hath neither the help of God, nor the ſtrength of a man. Upon all which it is apparent, that departing from our Father's Houſe, living beſide the notions of God, and without the exerciſes of devotion to actuate thoſe notions, is the ready way to all ſin and folly. Wherefore as pride and ſelf-conceit begin the mutiny in our Souls againſt God, ſo neglecting his preſence, ſuffers it to grow to a dangerous head; and as that was the firſt ſtep towards a wicked courſe, this is the ſecond.

3. Thirdly, the Prodigal having now gotten from under the eye of his Father, gives himſelf a full ſwinge of liberty; lives ἀσώτως, *ſottiſhly*, and *viciouſly*; and by that means quickly exhauſts the ſtock his Father had given him. Where-ever there is temperance and prudent management a little will ſuffice, and will quickly grow to great riches: by frugality and induſtry moſt of the great States and Kingdoms in the world have been raiſed, as well as private fortunes; but luxury and riot have diſapidated and deſtroyed both the one and the other. For theſe making continual abſtractions, without

without addition, quickly reduce the greateſt ſumm to a Cypher, and bring him to want of all things, who before had need of nothing, but grace and wiſdom to uſe that which he had. This the Prodigal Son finds true by ſad experience. And ſo it fares alſo with the ſinner, or myſtical Prodigal; when once he hath withdrawn himſelf from God's preſence, that is, hath caſt off the ſenſe of God and Religion, and broken thoſe reins that reſtrained his extravagancy, he preſently ruſhes into all kind of debauchery: and in ſo doing, beſides the black guilt he derives upon his Conſcience, he waſtes and imbezils the very talents and abilities God had endowed him with. For the more clear underſtanding of which, we will briefly, but diſtinctly conſider theſe two things. 1. What is that portion or ſtock which God ſets mankind up withall. 2. How and in what manner vice and diſſolution of manners miſpend and exhauſt it.

And for the former of theſe though it is not to be doubted, but that God according to his paternal prerogative and wiſdom, may, and doth variouſly diſpenſe his gifts to his Children; yet it is certain he ſends none of them out into the world without ſome talents to employ themſelves upon, and to make a vertuous improvement of. And amongſt all of that kind theſe four following are both the moſt rich and valuable in themſelves, and alſo ſuch is the divine bounty) moſt generally beſtowed. (*viz.*) 1. Freedom of choice. 2. Underſtanding, Mind, or Conſcience. 3. Experience of a wiſe and gracious intertexture of favours and chaſtiſements in the courſe of Providence. 4. Special intimations of his own mind and will.

In the firſt place I recount freedom of chuſing for our ſelves as part of the common portion of mankind in general: which I do the rather, becauſe I obſerve the Fathers generally to underſtand this to be the ſpecial intendment of this paſſage of the Parable. *Diviſit iis ſubſtantiam, He divided unto them his living:* that is, (ſaith S. * *Jerome*) *He bound not man under the rigid bonds of neceſſity, whereby he ſhould be forcibly over-ruled and determined to one thing, but put him in a capacity of making his own choice, to the end that being hereby diſtinguiſhed from beaſts, and more like his Maker, he might be capable of vertue and reward: and that as nothing ſhould make him miſerable without his own act and conſent, ſo he might have the comfort and delight of co-operating freely towards his own good and felicity.*

* *Dedit eis liberum arbitrium, dedit mentis propriæ libertatem, & ut viveret unuſquiſque non ex imperio Dei, ſed ex obſequio ſuo.* i. e. *non ex neceſſitate ſed ex voluntate, ut virtus haberet locum, ut à cæteris animantibus diſtaremus, dum ad exemplum Dei, permiſſum eſt nobis facere quod velimus.*

That this accompliſhment of humane nature is a great and ineſtimable talent no man can doubt, foraſmuch as hereby man is made to be what he is, that is, to be maſter of himſelf and his own actions, and obnoxious to none but God himſelf; being neither drawn by inviſible wires, but moved voluntarily, and from an inward principle, nor hurried by external accidents, but ſteers his own courſe, is not at the mercy of every temptation, but can make his own choice in ſpite of the Devil.

And that God ſet out man into the world thus endowed, there is as little reaſon to queſtion. For in the firſt place, we are ſure God made all things good,

good, that is, deſigned for good ends, and alſo capable of attaining them. And he that fitted all the inferiour Creation for their proper ends, moſt certainly did not leave that excellent piece of his workmanſhip ſo defective, as not to be endowed with powers ſufficient for the purſuit and attainment of his peculiar happineſs. At leaſt, it cannot be imagined, that infinite wiſdom ſhould contrive ſuch a Creature as ſhould be only able to croſs and act contrary to himſelf, but not to comply with him; which muſt be true if man had not originally a power of chuſing good as well as evil. Again, were it not for this, there would be an abſolute impoſſibility of giving account how ſin came into the world, and of vindicating the providence of God in tying that clog of an earthly Body to an immortal Soul, but that by this conceſſion the latter is made capable of governing the former; and abundance other great *Phænomena* of providence (which it is no time now to inſiſt upon) are plainly inſoluble otherwiſe than upon this ſuppoſition. But we need not inſiſt upon the proof of fact that this was the condition of man in his firſt Creation, when he came out of the hands of God, for it is acknowledged by all Divines; and if it be otherwiſe with him ſince, we have intimated already where the fault lies, and ſhall ſhew it more particularly by and by. *Chap.* 3. §. 3.

Καὶ τοῦτο δὴ ἦν ἄρχειν ἀγαθότητος ποιῆσαι τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ μιμητὸν ἐ φύσει μόνον κατασπειρόμενον, ἀλλὰ καὶ προαιρέσει γεωργουμένων, καὶ τοῖς ἐπ' ἀμφοτέρα αὐτεξουσίοις κινήμασιν. *Greg. Naz. orat.* 1.

2. The ſecond Talent of mankind is Mind or Conſcience, and I make uſe of both thoſe terms, becauſe I intend to join together both that which is called *Syntereſis*, and that which is called properly *Syneideſis*, or Conſcience. By the former of which, man having as it were a Standard within him-

himself of good and evil, he may guide himself in the choice of his actions; and by the latter he is able to reflect upon himself, and comparing his actions and carriage with the Standard or Law of reason in his own mind, pass a judgment upon himself; that is, either blame and condemn, or acquit and comfort himself accordingly. This Talent the old S. *Justin* calls Ἔμφυτον παντὶ γένει ἀνθρώπων, σπέρμα τοῦ λόγου, and σπερματικοῦ λόγου μέρος. *A particle of the Divine and Original Wisdom, or a scien of the true* λόγος, *or eternal word ingrafted upon the Soul of every man.* And it is this which *Theophylact* takes to be especially meant in this text. *The substance* (saith he) *which the Father divided amongst his Sons was Reason, which God gave in common to all mankind, and that in conjunction with freedom of mind; for every being that hath the use of reason, hath also liberty of election; the latter affording a Field or Theatre for the former to act upon, and the former enabling him to use the latter well.* And indeed, it was wondrous expedient, that since God had given mankind the Talent of liberty, that he should therewith bestow upon him a principle of reason to restrain and govern that liberty; that so having not only Sails to move him, but a Compass to direct him, he might shape his course agreeably to those ends God designed him for; or more plainly, having a copy of the divine mind implanted in his Soul, he might make the elections of his will conformable to those of his Maker. For since (as I said before) Men and Angels are not naturally and necessarily carried to their ends as other beings are, but many either move regularly towards them, or decline from them at their own choice;

Just. Mart. *Apoli* 1.

Οὐσία τοῦ ἀνθρώπου τὸ λογικόν ἐστιν ᾧ παρέπεται καὶ τὸ αὐτεξούσιον, πᾶν γὰρ λογικὸν αὐτεξούσιον, δίδωσιν οὖν ἡμῖν ὁ κύριος τὸν λόγον ἵνα χρησώμεθα τῷ αὐτεξουσίῳ, &c.

Τὰ γὰρ ἠθικὰ μαθήματα πάντας ἀνθρώπους ἡ φύσις ἐπαίδευσε *Theodoret. de virtute Act. orat.* 12.

choice; had not God put upon them this biaſs of reaſon to incline them the right way, they would have been in danger to have made ſuch an exorbitant uſe of their freedom, as to have given the whole Creation much greater diſturbance than yet they have done. And as well the truth of this aſſertion, as the value of this Talent, will appear moſt remarkably if we do but conſider what great improvements ſome have obtained to by the alone uſe of Reaſon, having never any other Talent of ſupernatural revelation afforded them that we know of. In contemplation of which *Tully* recounts it a prime favour of the divine Majeſty to humane nature, *That he had endowed their minds with natural notions, which are to them the ſeeds and principles of knowledge and vertue.* * And he further adds, *Were it not that God hath thus furniſhed the mind with ſuch a ſtock of proleptick principles of knowledge we could not have ever come to underſtand any thing*, and all induſtry, ſtudy and inquiry had been utterly loſt and fruitleſs; but by the means of theſe natural notions we have a kind of anticipation, an intellectual taſte and reliſh of truth and falſhood, good and evil, and ſo a meaſure to govern our ſelves by in our elections and proſecutions.

*Quod comprehenſionem dediſſet quaſi normam ſcientiæ & principium ſui.*

* *Sine quibus nec intelligi quicquam nec queri nec diſputari poſſit.* Tully *Acad. lib.* 1. & 4.

3. The third Talent given to all mankind for their improvement is the obſervable wiſe order and method of Divine Providence, wherein there is ſuch an admirable intertexture of mercies and afflictions, as that neither a conſtant ſeries of adverſities and croſs accidents ſhall break their ſpirit, or ingulph men in deſpair; nor yet ſuch a conſtant courſe of perpetual proſperity as to render them too light and airy, but a moderate interchange of both, to make them grave and ſerious. And be-

ſides, both theſe diſpenſed not fortuitouſly, but with ſuch diſcrimination, as that ordinarily men may not only be aſſured of a Providence in the general, but be able to obſerve the divine diſpleaſure againſt ſin and wickedneſs by the one, and his approbation of honeſty and goodneſs by the other; and ſo conſequently be both directed in their choice, and provoked to an anſwerable proſecution.

See *Acts* 14. v. 16, 17.

And although it be very true that ſuch exact courſe of providence be not now ordinarily obſervable in the world, becauſe God having now made a full and clear diſcovery of his whole mind to the Sons of Men by extraordinary revelation; as there is no need of this leſſer light when a far greater ſhines clearly, ſo alſo it ſeems good to his divine wiſdom to make the courſe of his providence more involved and intricate in many caſes, both for the tryal of good men, and the juſt hardning of the wicked and unbelieving. Nevertheleſs it is not credible that ſuch a cryptick method ſhould be the common courſe of his providence where thoſe reaſons ceaſe, and where he hath afforded no better light.

And beſides, we are ſure *de facto*, that there was ſuch a legible providence as we ſpeak of in the moſt ancient and Patriarchal times; when it was common to obſerve the finger of God by ſome calamity or other, pointing out and branding the offender, and his bleſſing viſibly deſcending upon and crowning worthy and vertuous perſons.

Thus God (whilſt as yet there was no revealed Law) did confirm and bear teſtimony to the laws of reaſon, and provide againſt the ſtaggering and fluctuation of Men's minds, in deducing thoſe natural concluſions by which they were then to go-

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vern themſelves, by the ſuffrage of his own providence. Conſonantly to which it was, that the Scripture or Holy Writ concerning thoſe times, is little more than an hiſtory of providence, or remarks of the good and evil that befel Men according to the demerits of their either vertuous or vicious behaviour; as whoſoever conſiders the Books of *Moſes* muſt acknowledge.

See to this purpoſe *Philo Jud. de vita Moſis, lib.* 2. *Iſidor. Peluſiot. lib.* 4. *Epiſt.* 176.

Hereupon the Book of *Geneſis* is called by S. *Hieronym.* Βίβλος ἐνδιάθετος in *Iſai.* 12.

And for the people of the *Jews* it is notorious, that the courſe of divine providence ran all along above ground amongſt them, (although they were not without written laws and lively Oracles of God,) of which without prying into the counſels of the Almighty, we may eaſily ſatisfie our ſelves by a double account: namely, partly to afford the more full teſtimony to thoſe ſanctions of his amongſt a hard-hearted People, partly alſo to ſupply the viſible defect of thoſe Laws in the moſt material rules of vertue; it pleaſed God to give intimation of his mind, and confirmation to the dictates of nature by ſuch extraordinary atteſtations of his providence.

But as for the *Gentiles* who were deſtitute of the aforeſaid advantage, having not *the more ſure word of Prophecy* (as the Apoſtle calls it) there is no doubt to be made but the divine goodneſs did ſupply that defect, as to the greater lines of vertue and vice, by the plain legibility of his providence; at leaſt ordinarily and far beyond what he doth amongſt thoſe that live under the full light of the Goſpel: which whoſo will not be induced to believe muſt juſtify his incredulity by perverſeneſs, and call in queſtion the faith of all the Hiſtories

ſtories of thoſe times and Countreys. And although we cannot deny, that it pleaſed God ſometimes, even amongſt thoſe people, to walk in the dark, ſuffering the good and evil things that befel men to be no ſure indications of his favour or diſpleaſure, yet the rarity of the caſe appears by the ſalvo they found out for this *Phænomenon*: namely, they imagined that when rewards and puniſhments, or rather good and evil, were miſmatched, and did not apply themſelves to vertue and vice reſpectively; that it proceeded from ſome fatal neceſſity, which was ſuperiour to the Gods, and not to be withſtood or hindered by them. By which it appears, that for the moſt part they obſerved a juſt *Nemeſis*, and righteous diſtribution of rewards and puniſhments in the courſe of the world. Which direction of providence added to the two former talents might be of great advantage to them, if not to make them truly good, yet certainly to make them leſs evil. And being thus general, as I have ſhewed, may be well called a third Talent of Mankind.

See *Euſeb. præpar. Evang. l* 6. *c.* 6. *Vid. paria his apud Herodot. in Cleone edit. Londin. p.* 38.

4. But I add in the fourth and laſt place, God hath ſo far conſulted the good of Mankind, and is ſo open handed to his Children, that beſides all the aforeſaid, he frequently vouchſafes them ſome intimations or other of his mind, to enable them the better to underſtand their duty, and purſue their happineſs.

As for ſuch as are placed in his Church under the full and certain light of revelation, they are preſſed upon by the mighty motives of unſpeakable rewards and puniſhments in another world; and theſe inculcated upon them by a publick miniſtry maintained by God for that purpoſe, and above all are under the vital operations of his Holy Spirit; exciting

citing their minds, fortifying their apprehenſions, fixing their attentions, and giving them as it were a view of the tranſactions in the other world: This muſt be acknowledged a peculiar favour, and not common to all, as the other were; yet if we conſider well, we ſhall find that the advantages of God's Church do in ſome reſpects extend beyond the pale of it: for as we ſee the Sun affords ſome light to thoſe upon whoſe Horizon he doth not appear, ſo we find that *Pythagoras* and ſeveral of the induſtrious and vertuouſly diſpoſed *Pagans* reaped great benefit by thoſe Oracles that were not given to them, but to the Nation of the *Jews*. And we may eaſily diſcover a great improvement in the moral diſcourſes of *Pagans*, ſince our Saviour came into the World; divine light reflecting as it were from the Church, (upon which the direct beams thereof fell) to the reſt of the World. Beſides which it is no way probable, that a good God ſhould ſo far neglect ſo great a part of mankind as was called *Pagan*, as to afford them no intimations of his mind, towards the bettering of their reaſonings in thoſe matters of importance which he principally created them for. In reſpect to which *Tully* ſpake admirably, *Nemo unquam vir magnus ſine afflatu divino, That there was never a great and brave man in the World, but had ſome impulſes and inſpirations from the Almighty.* And indeed when I ſeriouſly conſider either the divine Attributes, or the experience of men, I ſee great reaſon to doubt whether ever there was that man that had not more or leſs ſome ſuch kind of aſſiſtances from his Maker, till he himſelf rendered himſelf unworthy thereof. Which brings me to the ſecond thing I promiſed to ſpeak to; (*viz.*)

So it may ſeem that all mankind is God's Vineyard, S. *Luk.* 13. 6. but the Jews the Fig-tree in the Vineyard.

Tully *de* Divinat.

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2. Secondly, how vice and diſſolution of manners ſpend and exhauſt this ſtock God hath ſet mankind up withall: and of this the account is very eaſie. For in the firſt place it is plain, that habits and facility of doing any thing, are procured by frequent and repeated acts: and as the more vertuous actions of any kind a man doth, the more prone he is to do ſo again, ſo every vicious action which a man commits begets a propenſion and inclination to others of the ſame kind. When a man hath uſed to ſubdue his paſſions to his reaſon, they eaſily ſubmit and bear the yoke; but he that hath accuſtomed them to their full ſcope, they ſwell and rage, and will not eaſily be brought into order; and this will be true although thoſe two men were ſuppoſed to have equally violent paſſions naturally, be it of what kind ſoever. Cuſtom we call a ſecond nature, but it hath the power to ſupplant the firſt and original nature, putting new propenſions as another biaſs upon the Spirit. By which we ſee clearly how vice deſtroys the firſt talent of mankind, that freedom which God ſet them up withal. Which point gained, affords us reſolution of another queſtion (though not of this place) namely, hereby we ſee how it comes to paſs, that good and vertuous men rejoyce in the eaſineſs and delights of a vertuous courſe, when contrariwiſe evil and vicious men complain of impotency, and pretend the horrible difficulties thereof; for theſe contrary effects proceed from the ſame cauſe, and ſhew the mighty power of cuſtom on both ſides.

*Tanta autem eſt corruptela malæ conſuetudinis, ut ab ea tanquam igniculi à natura dati extinguantur.* Cic. *de leg. l.* 1.

And then for the ſecond talent of natural reaſon or underſtanding, nothing is more plain than that vicious practices blind the eyes of the mind, partly as the ſtreams of luſt and paſſion ſend up a cloud which

which dulls the higher regions of the Soul: partly alſo as luxury commonly brings a ſtupid ſlothfulneſs upon the Spirits of men, that they chuſe rather to bury that talent, than be at the trouble to employ it; but principally as all wickedneſs prejudices men, making it become their ſeeming intereſt to ſhut their eyes leſt they ſhould behold their ſhame, or make the proſecution of that more uneaſie and uncomfortable to them, from which they are reſolved not to deſiſt. And for that faculty which is properly called Conſcience, we have intimated already, that the frequent injuries done to it render it callous and inſenſible.

As for that which we called a third Talent, namely, the teſtimony which God in his providence uſually gives to vertue, and the diſcountenance to vice: theſe the vicious man either Atheiſtically imputes to blind chance, becauſe he obſerves ſome exceptions and irregularities in the method of their diſpenſation; or elſe turns the arguments God affords him of gratitude into grounds of ſecurity, or his fatherly chaſtiſements into occaſion of ſullenneſs and deſperation, or one way or other renders this talent unuſeful.

But if it pleaſe God to do ſomething extraordinary, and awaken him by a peculiar addreſs to him; he doth as the *Romans* when *Petilius* fortunately digged up and brought to light the ſacred Writings of *Numa Pompilius*, which probably would have put them upon a better devotion than they were willing to comply with. The Conſul ſwore the Books were *Diſſolvendarum Religionum*; *q. d.* not calculated for the preſent Age, whereupon they commanded them to be burnt. So the ſinner ſtubbornly oppoſes the light which would reproach his practice and diſturb his ſecurity. And Tit. Liv. lib. 40.

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thus we have ſeen what ſtock God ſets men up with, and how they miſ-ſpend it.

Ὅπου γὰρ τῆς σωφροσύνης ὁ σῖτος οὐ γεωργεῖται, ἐκεῖ λιμὸς ἰσχυρὸς, &c. Chryſoſt. *in locum.*

4. But to go on with the Parable, the next news we hear of the Prodigal, is, that having ſpent all his patrimony in careleſs and riotous living, and a famine ſucceeding his profuſion, he is now reduced to extremity, and knows not whither to betake himſelf; wherefore having no other choice, he is conſtrained to joyn himſelf to a Citizen of that Countrey; that is, to become a ſlave. It was wiſely and truly ſaid by one of the Ancients, that frugality and temperance were αὐτοδίδακτος φιλοσοφία, *homebred Philoſophy*; or the moſt cheap and compendious way of attaining all moral wiſdom and happineſs: for they make life eaſie, and temptation little; they prevent care, and ſhut out fear: they raiſe the ſpirit of a man by beſtowing on him a kind of ſelf ſufficiency; ſuch a man doth not maliciouſly deſpiſe the world, becauſe he cannot attain it, for he finds it in his power to arrive at much, and in his temper to need but little, and ſo is truly above it.

*Si ſervitus ſit obedientia fracti & abjecti animi & arbitrio carentis ſuo, quis neget omnes leves, omnes cupidos, omnes denique improbos eſſe ſervos?* Cicer. *Paradox. vid. etiam* Philon. *lib. Quod omnis vir probus liber.*

Theſe with their inſeparable companion Induſtry, are as it were the roots of a Patrimony, which not only keep it alive and flouriſhing, but alſo make it fruitfull and multiply; but the contrary vices are ſuch ſottiſh ſins that they deſtroy the very ſtock they grow upon, and undermine their own foundation; that is, they eat out themſelves and that which raiſed them, and ſhould have maintained them. And which is yet worſe, they do not only ſtarve themſelves, but cut off a man's retreat, and caſt him into a condition that he could not

live

live comfortably if he ſhould return to ſobriety. For it is in this caſe as *Cicero* ſaid of *Dionyſius* of *Syracuſe*, *He had lived ſo wickedly, and exerciſed ſo much tyranny and cruelty, that having procured the common hatred of mankind, it was too late to think of redintegrating himſelf by taking up and changing his courſe.* His wickedneſs had been too great to let his converſion be believed real, and his injuries too many to hope for ſecurity in a way of mildneſs. *Scelus ſcelere protegendum eſt*, he muſt now go on and juſtify, or at leaſt protect his former villanies by more and greater.

*Salvus eſſe non potuit, ſi ſanus eſſe cœpiſſet.* Tuſc. Q. 5.

So it is with voluptuous perſons, by a long habit they have made exceſſes almoſt neceſſary to their bodies, and ſuch exceſſes do ſo harraſs Men's fortunes, that they cannot long correſpond with ſuch unreaſonable occaſions: together herewith eaſe and ſloth the concomitants of luxury do ſo relax Men's nerves and infeeble their conſtitution, that they are rendered incapable of ſupplying the defects of their fortune by their own induſtry; ſo that between the neceſſity of expending much, and the impoſſibility of gaining any thing, the difficulties of returning to ſobriety become as great and diſcouraging, as the pleaſures of riots are charming and bewitching.

Hence it comes to paſs, that ſuch men uſually reaſon with themſelves, as the unjuſt Steward in the Goſpel, *Dig I cannot, and to beg I am aſhamed*; wherefore they muſt apply themſelves to ſome remedy as deſperate as the diſeaſe; ſome bold and daring courſe, ſome great and horrible ſin muſt relieve them out of the ſtraits former wickedneſs hath caſt them into. And thus the Prodigal having ſpent all, *joins himſelf to a Citizen.* Who this Citizen is S. *Jerome* tells us, it is the Devil, he

he is the buſy Negotiatour of this World, *that goes about ſeeking whom he may devour*, and is ready to liſt thoſe into his ſervice, who (having miſ-ſpent their Talents) are by a vicious neceſſity diſpoſed for his purpoſes. For ſuch as have forfeited their own liberty are fit to be his ſlaves; ſuch as have driven away the good ſpirit, ſhall be ſure to be haunted with this evil ſpirit. And they that have put out their own eyes, and blinded their minds, are fit Subjects of the Kingdom of darkneſs.

None but ſuch as have been accuſtomed to debauch their own faculties and ſtifle their Conſciences, can yield him ready obedience. But thoſe that have ſotted themſelves with ſenſuality, are ſwollen with pride or malice, or by ſome vicious habit or other have loſt the command of themſelves, and the protection of the Almighty; theſe fall readily into this ſnare, and according to the phraſe of the Apoſtle, *are taken captive by him at his will.* And the uſe he puts them to we ſhall ſee in the next particular. For,

2 Tim. 2. 26.

5. The Prodigal *is put to feed Swine.* It is amongſt the great calamities of a riotous life that firſt it effeminates Men by ſoft indulgencies whileſt their fortunes hold out, and then afterwards breaks their ſpirits when adverſity befals them, by a ſhameful reflection upon their beaſtly folly. And between theſe two, ſuch Men are ſeldom or never after capable of any generous and manly employment; from whence it comes to paſs, that they are ordinarily by the juſt judgment of God condemned either to the moſt ridiculous and contemptible, or to the moſt ſordid and vile offices. And ſuch we may be ſure will be the caſe of the Myſtical prodigal being now become a ſlave to Satan.

It

And he would faine have filled his belly with the

Ἀμελήσω τῆς ἀρετῆς, ἐὰν μοι δείξῃς
ἀμυγῆ, ἡδονὴν ἀμεταγνωσον, &c. M

Page 174 and 175.

ξης ἡδονὴν ἀσφαλῆ καὶ λύπης
c. *Maxim. Tyr.* diſſer. 31.

1678

It was a ſad inſtance of the tyranny and inſolence of the Devil over apoſtate Mankind, that he fooled them to ſuch a baſe abjection of mind, as to give him a kind of religious worſhip, appearing to them under the form of a Goat, or ſome other the moſt infamous of brute Creatures. This is too well known to have been commonly done amongſt the *Pagans*; and it ſeems probable that this vile Idolatry was invented and required by that malicious ſpirit, not more to affront the Almighty by intercepting his worſhip, than to ſcorn and inſult over humane nature by ſuch a ſordid proſtitution. But it is not only Idolatry, but all kind *of ſin is the Devil's work.* And whoſoever renders himſelf up to the power of any ſin, doth his drudgery as truly as thoſe poor abuſed Heathens; for though he doth not with the ſame formalities ridiculouſly bow himſelf to a beaſt, he doth the ſame thing in effect when he proſtitutes himſelf to brutality. What more ignoble thing, than for him that hath an immortal Soul, an underſtanding Mind, and free Faculties, by which he is fit for the converſation of God and Angels, to forget all this, and humble himſelf to ſerve a beaſt? Nor is it any matter of difference, whether a man ſerve his own beaſt or another man's, I mean, the beaſt within him or without him: ſome beaſt or other every vicious man ſerves. 1 John 3. 8.

He that indulges Rage and Paſſion miniſters to a Tiger; and he that addicts himſelf to ſordid Craft and Subtilty, worſhips a Fox. He that baſely plays the Hypocrite, ſerves the Dog, or the Hyæna. He that gives himſelf up to Laſciviouſneſs, worſhips a Goat; and he that is a ſervant of Meat and Drink, makes a God of his Belly, and very properly may be ſaid to ſerve Swine. *Vide* Arriani Epictet. *lib.* 2. *cap.* 9.

It is a well known Paſſage in *Plato*, where he ſuppoſes that when Mens Souls are departed from their preſent Bodies, they are adjudged to actuate and inform ſome ſuch Creatures as they had moſt reſembled in their humour and practice whilſt they were alive; but without ſuch a Tranſmigration after Death, which we are ſure is both falſe and ridiculous, all vicious Men may be ſaid to be transformed in this life as aforeſaid; for tho' they retain the outward ſhape, they have the inſide and temper of Brutes. But it is not the only calamity of ſerving the Devil, that a Man muſt debaſe his Nature to the vileſt condition, in compliance with his commands; for there is this farther inſtance of the ſeverity of that *Egyptian* Task-maſter, that he puts thoſe that are under his power, to *make brick without ſtraw:* I mean (God in juſt judgment permitting it ſo to be) the Devil drives ſo furiouſly towards Man's deſtruction, that he will ordinarily prompt and hurry them on in ſin beyond their intereſts; nay, their very vicious inclination, and even the capacity of their circumſtances and conſtitution. As if he deſigned that they ſhould not only *treaſure up wrath againſt the day of wrath*, but be miſerably wrackt and tortured here, and *tormented before their time.*

We count the Water-rack a very ſevere torture, to have that Element forced down a Man's throat, till all the veſſels of his Body are ſtretched and tympanized; ſo that inſtead of Air, he draws in Water with his Breath, ready to ſtifle him. And yet this torture we ſee the Drunkard ſubmit himſelf to at the Devil's command.

It it very dreadful to have our limbs and nerves diſtended by Pullies and ſuch other Engines. And the laſcivious Man is ſenſible of ſomething like this,

this, when he forces Nature to comply with his vicious fancy, and a prevalent temptation. When in some kind of executions they poured scalding Lead down the throat of the Malefactor, which the *Jews* called the burning of the Soul, it was doubtless very terrible: but he that suffers Revenge to fry in his bosom, and eat out his very heart and bowels, undergoes something not very much inferiour.

To say no more, what more horrid torments can any Tyrant invent or inflict, or what more abominable ignominy can his malice expose any Man to, than the usual effects of Sensuality do either execute upon a Man's person, or stigmatize his name withal? We see, in the course of Nature, the several parts of the Universe give place to the interest of the whole; or, as we commonly speak, private Nature gives place to publick, as the Water ascends to prevent vacuity, *&c.* But in this little world, Man, when the Devil hath got interest in him, publick Nature, Humanity it self is violenced for the lust of a private person; of which the Apostle gives us too sad an instance in the debauched Heathen, *Rom.* 1. 26, 27. which passage I have no mind to explain.

This is the condition of the Devil's service, in respect of which, the difficultest parts of God's service are easie and voluptuous. I'll conclude this particular, and sum up what hath been hitherto said in the words of *Chrysologus*: *Behold* (saith he) *the sad Catastrophe of rash and incogitant voluptuousness! it turns him out into a strange Country that might have lived happy in his father's house; makes a beggar of one that was rich, changes*

*Ecce quid faciat præceps cupiditas, civem in peregrinum, locupletem in egenum, filium in mercenarium convertit; junxit porcis quem à patre piissimo sejunxit; ut serviret cænoso pecori, qui pietati sanctæ parere contempserit.*

*the condition of a ſon into that of a ſlave, compels him to feed naſty Swine, who declined the ſervice of a gracious Father.* But this is not the full end of the Sinner's Tragedy: for,

6. The Prodigal's Fare is as coarſe as his Employment was ſordid; *he is forc'd to feed upon huſks:* ſome take the word in the Original to ſignifie Bran, according to that of the Poet, --- *vivit ſiliquis & pane ſecundo.* But the word κερατιον properly ſignifies the ſeed of the tree *Ceronia* or *Charob*, which afforded a coarſe fare, which extreme neceſſity ſometimes drove Men to be content with-al. But let us ſee the Moral of it: *Origen* underſtands by Huſks, the delights of wanton Poetry, with which the Devil uſually feeds and entertains looſe perſons, making them both fit and willing to his ſervice. I remember ſomewhere to have read (and I think it is in *Clemens* of *Alexandria*) that it was his opinion, that *Pagan* Philoſophy was hereby meant, which being but the *exterior Cortex* or Huſk of true Knowledge, ſerved notwithſtanding to amuſe and buſie the Gentile World. But I think our Saviour meant nothing elſe hereby, than to repreſent to us the pitiful entertainment, the emptineſs and unſatisfactorineſs of all the Incomes of Sin: that all the gratifications by which the Devil allures Men into the baſeſt drudgery, prove, upon trial, the Apples of *Sodom*, perform nothing of what they promiſe. *Solomon* hath told us, that *an wheriſh woman will bring a man to a morſel of bread*; and it is true, in proportion, of all the inſtances of riot and luxury, which is ſo much the more ſevere calamity to ſuch kind of perſons, becauſe they uſually in their proſperity careſſing themſelves at the higheſt rate imaginable, pampering themſelves and their luſts

Plin. *Nat. hiſt. l.* 15. *c.* 24.

luſts together, muſt needs feel the change from one extreme to the other to be exceeding ſharp and painful. But let us ſee this a little more particularly, in order to which the Apoſtle S. *John* hath ſummed up all the returns of Sin in theſe words, 1 John 2. 16. *The things that are in the world are the luſts of the fleſh, the luſt of the eye, and the pride of life*; or in other words, bodily pleaſure, worldly profit, and vain glory. And all theſe, when duly conſidered, will prove but Huſks, ſuch as our voluptuous Prodigal, now the Devil's Vaſſal, is conſtrained to feed upon.

Firſt, for bodily pleaſure, that is notoriouſly the entertainment of Beaſts rather than of Men: for it is they that have the quickeſt ſenſe and reliſh of it; Man is aſham'd of himſelf when he yields to it, and therefore ſeeks receſſes and the dark, as being aware that he condeſcends below himſelf when he ſtoops to it; therefore certainly God intended it as fodder for Beaſts, not food for Men. Sawce is the moſt that it can be allowed to be, and he is not to be reckon'd a Man that can content himſelf with it, or live as if he were made for it. For beſides that all wiſe Men who have tryed it pronounce it to be but chaff and vanity, even thoſe who are ſo ſilly as to purſue it with the greateſt eagerneſs and appetite, finding themſelves empty and diſappointed, are conſtrained to hunt after variety, and to weary themſelves in going from one pleaſure to another, in hopes to find that ſatisfaction which is never there to be had. Bodily pleaſure is fitly repreſented by the ſtories we have of the Feaſts and Junkettings of Witches and Fiends; in which, after great appearance of delicacies, wherewithal the Gueſts ſeem to ſatiate themſelves, they notwithſtanding find themſelves

*Vide* Ciceronem *de ſenectute.*

as empty as before the Banquet. The mind of Man is of another make, and of a greater capacity than to be filled with ſuch traſh. It is only intellectual pleaſure, the contents of Wiſdom, the peace of a good Conſcience, the reflexions upon having done ſome good, which are the repaſt of a Man, and theſe are ſolid and laſting; there is more true and manly delight in any one ſuch inſtance, than in all the careſſes of the Epicure.

And then for Profit; it is very inconſiderable gain that is brought in by Sin, if Accounts be juſtly caſt up. For, all thoſe Sins which have either any guſto of pleaſure or air of credit attending them, are uſually coſtly and expenſive; and for thoſe profitable Sins of Injuſtice, Covetouſneſs, Oppreſſion, *&c.* they are uſually incumbred with ſo much anxiety, followed with ſuch guilt, branded with ſo much reproach, that there needs a new Arithmetick to be deviſed to make out the Profit of them. Above all, If we conſider that thus to *gain a whole world and to loſe a man's ſoul*, is the moſt ſad and unfortunate Bargain. For it is to poſſeſs a great deal for the ſhort leaſe of life, and then to be turned out of all to all eternity; and whilſt he doth poſſeſs it, it is ſo far from ſatisfying his Mind, or appeaſing his Conſcience, as that it cannot allay the Gout, aſſwage the Tooth-ach, nor cure any Diſeaſe of the Body. In ſum, What is that Gain which neither makes the wiſer, nor the better, nor the more comfortable Man?

But then for Glory and Fame, theſe are not uſually the Attendants of Sin, but of ſome kind of Vertues: the portion of Sin is Shame and Infamy, foraſmuch as it is an irregularity, a deformity, and in the mildeſt ſenſe, it is a confeſſion of Folly, Weakneſs, and Impotency. Notwithſtanding it is

too

too true, ſome Sins carry applauſe with them, but amongſt whom? competent Judges of honour, wiſe and good Men? No, but the ſilly Vulgar, or at leaſt ſuch as have a feeling in the cauſe, and are partakers in the guilt. But let us ſee the Inſtances: Some Man glories, that in his Pot-valour he can drink down whom he pleaſes, no Man can ſtand before him, and upon this he ſwaggers as a mighty Champion, whereas in truth he is but a great Hogſhead, or a naſty Sink thro' which a great deal of good Liquor runs, and his only Ability is, that he changes and corrupts it in the paſſage. Another vaunts his Courage and Daring; he'll lay down his Life upon the leaſt Provocation. But ſhall we think that Man is conſcious to himſelf of any worth, that will ſtake his Life down for every trifle? Is he worthy of his Life that deſpiſes it? Is he either wiſe or juſt that will caſt that away in a frolick or a rage, which is owing to the ſervice of his Prince and Country. O but the great Heroes of the World, that ranſack Kingdoms, and ſet up the Monuments of their Victories in every place! Theſe are they that Fools indeed flatter, becauſe they fear them. Nevertheleſs, whilſt theſe live in all their Greatneſs, they cannot avoid the horrible Curſes and Imprecations of thoſe they have made fatherleſs or childleſs: and theſe uſually have that effect upon them, that they ſeldom deſcend without blood to their Graves,

*Ad generum Cereris ſine cæde & ſanguine pauci,*
*Deſcendunt Reges & ſiccâ morte Tyranni.*

And when they are gone, their Memory is blaſted in the Annals of time, and their great Atchievements reputed *magna latrocinia.* But take

worldly honour at the beſt that can be made of it, it is but a blaſt, a bubble, there is nothing of ſolidity in it, nothing that can really ſatisfie the mind of a Man; this is the thin and pitiful diet the Devil feeds his ſlaves with; all thoſe therefore that dote upon Pleaſure, or Riches, or Glory, feed upon huſks with the Prodigal.

7. But that's not the worſt of his condition yet; if the Prodigal could have had Huſks enough, he would have thought his condition not intolerable as the caſe ſtood; but ſaith the Text, *he deſired to fill his belly with the huſks, but no man gave unto him.* And now his condition is ſad indeed. He that formerly loathed Delicates, now to come to want Neceſſaries; he that ſurfeited upon Viands, now to ſtarve for want of Huſks; this breaks his heart. And in this the Emblem of a Sinner is ſtill carried on: all thoſe Huſks of Pleaſure, and Gain, and Applauſe, are a coarſe fare for a Man that hath an immortal Soul. But ſome could ſo far forget the dignity of their Nature, and contract themſelves, that they could be content if they might but have enough of theſe. If, I ſay, Men could always ſwim in Pleaſure, flow with Riches, and mount aloft in Glory, they would think the wages of Sin well paid; but the time will come when theſe will be denied them too. As for bodily Pleaſure, that quickly grows out of date, and we ſoon loſe the reliſh of ſuch things as were formerly moſt grateful in this kind; the moſt delicious Viands are nothing to him that hath no Palate, and the moſt raviſhing Muſick to him that hath no ear; and what do all the charms of Beauty ſignifie to a languid Body and effete Nature? The time comes on apace upon every Man when he ſhall ſay with old *Barzillai*, 2 Sam. 19. 35. *Can*

*I taſte*

*I taſte what I eat or drink? or can I hear any more the voice of ſinging men or ſinging women?* Or, as *Solomon* elegantly deſcribes the caſe, *Eccles.* 12. 2, 3, 4, 5, &c. *When the keepers of the houſe tremble, and the ſtrong men ſhall bow themſelves, and the grinders ceaſe becauſe they are few, and thoſe that look out at the windows be darkned*, &c. When a Man ſhall have his winding-ſheet in his eye, and his laſt knell in his ear; when with great difficulty and continual labour at the pump of Life, he hardly keeps his leaky Veſſel from ſinking; what then do all the objects of the Senſes gratifie him, when the Senſes themſelves are now ſhutting in their windows, and bidding everlaſting good night? Then thoſe entertainments become not only dull and flat, but irkſome and tormenting, and only ſerve to upbraid his Impotency. For when a Man ſhall ſay with *Sampſon*, I will rouze my ſelf as at other times, alas *Dalilah* hath ſhaven his locks, betrayed his ſtrength, and bound him down to a ſtate of inactivity. And which is farther conſiderable, the more a Man hath indulged himſelf the full enjoyment of theſe things in his youth, the more he accelerates theſe infirmities and loathings of age, and far the ſooner loſes all guſt of them. And then, like *Tantalus*, he is tormented with the ſight of what he cannot reach, for he feels himſelf ſinking and periſhing.

Then for the Riches and Gain of the World, though it be commonly obſerved that Men are ſo ridiculous as to be moſt earneſt in making proviſion for their Voyage, when they are almoſt at their Journeys end, moſt carking and reaching after the World when they have leaſt concern in it; yet *this their way is their folly*, and in a little time it will be ſaid, *Thou fool, this night ſhall thy ſoul*

*ſoul be taken from thee:* His beloved Bags muſt be left behind to he knows not who; his Poſſeſſions have a new Owner, his beautiful Habitation another Inhabitant, whilſt he that gathered all theſe is cloſe Priſoner in the Grave, and hath not ſo much as the beholding them with his eyes. But beſides, What do theſe things advantage him in the mean time? Can they prolong the term of Life, or bribe and ſtave off Death? Can they ſupport his Spirit, or comfort his Mind? Nay, they are ſo far from that, that it's well if they call not to his remembrance the unjuſt ways by which he heaped them together; or if that ſad Circumſtance be eſcaped, they are but monuments of his Folly, that ſet his heart on thoſe things that will be ſure to deſert him in his need: and in fine, which ſerve only to make him do that unwillingly which muſt be done in ſpight of him; that is, inſtead of ſecuring him from Death, or preparing him for it, or fortifying him under it, they do in every reſpect the quite contrary: his Riches periſh, and he periſhes with them, and it may be by them.

Laſtly, for that gawd of Fame and worldly Glory, it is of ſo thin a contexture, that it is diſputable whether it have any ſubſtance at all or no; or any being otherwiſe than in fancy and conceit. But to be ſure it is far too ſlight to laſt long, and too airy to give any ſatisfaction to a languiſhing Spirit or a dying Man. When a Man's mind comes to be ſerious, to retreat into it ſelf, to feel remorſe for former Follies, what will it avail him that he hath a name amongſt Men, that he hath carried it fairly, and raiſed a reputation with thoſe that ſee not into the inſide of things? that he hath appear'd bravely upon the Stage, but is ſtript of all behind the Curtain; is taunted and condemned by his

The younger son wasted his substance with

1678.

Ἤβη καὶ νεότης ἐπικουφίζει νό
Πολλῶν δ', ἀπαίρει θυμὸν

with riotous living. St LUKE. XV. 13.

ἡ νόον ἀνδρὸς
ὸν ἐς ἀμπλακίην. } Theogn:

his own Conſcience, and by God who is greater than his Conſcience, and knows all things. It is not all the plumes of Fame, together with popular breath, can lift a Man up when his own weight ſinks him, and his guilt caſts him down: eſpecially when Death approaches, how ridiculous will it be to go about to comfort a Man's ſelf with report, when he is going into the land of Forgetfulneſs? A good name indeed for brave and vertuous Actions, embalms a Man's memory to all Ages; but *the name of the wicked ſhall rot*, in deſpight of all the Spicery of Flatterers and Paraſites. What is there in being talk'd of, when I ſhall be no more ſeen? What to be mentioned in Hiſtory, unleſs my Name be written in the Book of Life? *Tully* ſomewhere diſputes with himſelf, *Longam an latam famam mallet? Whether was moſt deſirable, a ſpreading or a laſting name?* Whether to be talked of in many Countries, or to be remembred to many Ages? But the matter is not great which of the two, nor will both of them joined together be of any moment, if a Man either ceaſe to be, or be in ſuch a condition that it had been good for him never to have been. For, *Notus nimium omnibus qui ignotus moritus ſibi, He that hath not made it his care ſo to know himſelf as to ſecure himſelf of a bleſſed immortality, it will be little comfort or antidote againſt Death, that he ſhall be talked of far and near when he is gone.* So that upon the whole matter, in theſe things conſiſt all the maintenance and encouragement the Devil can give his Servants; and theſe being ſo mean and ſlight in themſelves, and failing Men too at laſt, they have a moſt uncomfortable bondage that give up themſelves to his ſervice.

CHAP.

## CHAP. V.

### The Habitual Sinner's caſe ſtated, or a Reflexion upon what hath been ſaid in the foregoing Chapter.

The CONTENTS.

§. I. *The import of the phraſe* [when he came to himſelf] *ſhews, that the Prodigal was all this while hitherto not well in his wits, and that the habitual Sinner is in a like condition.*

§. II. *The truth of which appears by conſidering either the moſt uſual cauſes or effects of Diſtraction.*

§. III. *Objections againſt this Inference anſwered.*

§. IV. *The Application and Concluſion of this firſt Part of the Parable.*

Verſ. 17.

*And when he came to himſelf he ſaid,* &c.

WE have in the foregoing Chapter traced the Prodigal from the freedom and felicities of his Father's houſe, to the extremity of miſery and ſervitude which his extravagant humour caſt him into: and in him, and the iſſues of his way, we have ſeen the Beginnings, the Progreſs, and the Reſult of a ſinful Courſe, lively repreſented. Now ſumming up all together, and reflecting upon what hath been ſaid, it is evident that the perſon here deſcribed, eſpecially if he reſolve to continue in this condition, cannot be in his right wits. The truth of which, all Men that ſeriouſly conſider the Premiſes cannot but bear witneſs to. And beſides,

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it is plainly ſuggeſted by our Saviour himſelf in theſe words, *ver.* 17. *when he came to himſelf*, &c. εἰς ἑαυτὸν ἐλθών, which Phraſe either ſignifies a Man dead, (or in a ſwoon at leaſt) and coming to life again; or a Man drunk, diſpelling at laſt the cloud of his fumes, and recovering the uſe of his limbs and ſenſes; or a man diſtracted, and returning to his wits and underſtanding again.

And indeed, all theſe are applicable enough to an habitual Sinner, he is morally or ſpiritually *dead*, Eph. 2. 1. *You hath he quickned who were dead in treſpaſſes and ſins.* The diſeaſe of wilful Sin doth ſo deprave Mens Natures and diſable their Powers, that there appears no hope of recovery to a ſenſe of God and Goodneſs, no more than of a Man naturally dead, unleſs God be pleaſed to breath into him the breath of life. He is *drunk*, the ſteams of luſt have clouded and beſotted his underſtanding, and oppreſſed all his vital powers, that for the preſent he is not able to guide, nor fit to govern himſelf; he hath rather the ſhape than the ſenſe of a Man, no Man takes his judgment, nor regards what he ſaith or doth, but every Man looks upon him as a Beaſt: and were it not that there is hope of his recovery, would think him fit, with *Nebuchadnezzar*, to be turned out to graſs. But becauſe this diſturbance is uſually ſhort, it doth not therefore come ſo home to the condition of the Sinner; for Sin is a *laſting Frenzy* or Diſtraction, and agrees thereto both in the cauſes and in the ſymptoms.

οἶμαι γ ἴσως πᾶ ἡ ψυχῆς νοσήματα πάντα μανίας σφοδρῆς εἶ ἀμαυρώσας τὸ λογισμῷ δόξας τινὰς καὶ φαντασίας, &c. *Hippocr. Epiſt. ad Senat. Abderit.*

The true account of the *Cauſe* of Diſtraction (as I take it) is this, when the animal Spirits, by ſome accident or other, are ſo over-heated, that they become unſerviceable to cool and ſedate reaſoning. And then Reaſon being thus laid aſide, Fancy gets the aſcendant, and *Phaeton*-like, drives on

on furiouſly and inconſiſtently. This combuſtion of the Spirits happens ſometimes by over-great intention of the Mind in long and conſtant ſtudy, ſometimes by a Fever, which inflaming the blood, that communicates the *incendium* to the Spirits, which take their original from it. But moſt uſually by the rage and violence of ſome of the Paſſions, (whether iraſcible or concupiſcible, as they are wont to be diſtinguiſhed) a Man ſetting his heart vehemently upon ſome Object or other, the Spirits are ſet on fire by the violence of their own motion; and in that rage are not to be governed by Reaſon. This we have ſad Examples of, in Love, in Grief, in Jealouſies, in Wrath and Vexation; and indeed, *Bethlehem* is filled with the Inſtances. And this account fits but too well the caſe we have in hand, namely, of the wilful and habitual Sinner. He having paſſionately addicted himſelf to ſome one or other of thoſe worldly Objects we lately ſpoke of, all his Spirits are engaged in the purſuit of it, and with that heat and vehemency, that nothing can ſtop their career, nor bring them under the reins of Reaſon. No conſiderations of God, or a World to come, can come into play; no checks of Conſcience are attended to; whatſoever comes on't, the Paſſion muſt be obeyed, Luſt muſt have its full ſwing, be the danger or conſequence of it what it will.

Then for the uſual *ſymptoms* of Diſtraction, if we ſee a Man that hath unſpeakable danger over his head, inſomuch that every Man that ſees him bewails and pities him, but he pities not himſelf: if we ſee him diſporting upon the brink of a precipice, and the ground breaking away under him; nay, if we ſhall ſee him court danger, tear his own fleſh, and delight in his own miſchief: or again, ſuppoſe

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we obſerve a Man to have rich Offers made him, but he deſpiſes them, and prefers Trifles before them; or to be moſt fierce and injurious to thoſe who are moſt earneſt to do him good, do we not account theſe the tokens of Diſtraction? And is not the caſe the very ſame, when a Man ſhall be found to go on in a courſe of Sin that God and his own Conſcience have denounced Damnation to, and be ſecure when there is nothing between him and utter Deſtruction but the frail thread of Life, the moſt uncertain thing in the World; when a Man ſhall in fondneſs to ſome Sin or other, deſpiſe the counſels of God's Word, ſlight his Promiſes, laugh at his Threatnings, and even defie the Almighty; when he ſhall expreſs ſo much Hate and Indignation againſt none, as thoſe that reprove his Folly, adviſe him for his Good, and forewarn him of his Danger; in ſhort, that is every moment ready to drop into Hell, and yet goes on carelesly and jollily, is not this laughter of his, *Riſus Sardonius*, *i. e.* plainly notoriouſly phrenetical in the higheſt degree? We read, *Acts* 26. 25. that *Feſtus* was of opinion that much ſtudy had made S. *Paul* mad, when he took notice of ſuch a wonderful Zeal in him for Chriſtianity, that no Difficulties would abate his edge, no Allurements or Flatteries withdraw him, no Menaces affright him, nor no Sufferings prevail at all upon him. But S. *Paul* ſufficiently clears himſelf of that ſuſpicion, giving a juſt and manly account of his Perſuaſion, and the reaſons of his Reſolution. And withal, *ver.* 11. he confeſſes time was when he was mad indeed, when he was hurried by his own Paſſions and Prejudices to make all the oppoſition he was able againſt Chriſtianity, περισσῶς ἐμμαινόμενος (ſaith he) I was exceedingly mad and outrageous

rageous against it. But there were a great many allowances to be made in his case; he had been bred a Pharisee, the education in which Sect had put him under the greatest prejudices against Christianity that could be possibly: the Gospel was a new thing in the World, which character was enough to condemn it; but besides, it lay open to a great many disadvantages, which it is unseasonable here to mention, by reason of all which, he thought he should do God good service to oppose it: he therefore only obeyed his erring Conscience, followed the best Reason he then had, and what he did amiss he did it ignorantly, and accordingly God had mercy on him. But what can be pretended on the behalf of the habitual Sinner against the common law of Reason and Morality? Can he plead Ignorance, or pretend Conscience? Is Morality a new Opinion, or was Debauchery ever espoused for the *Dogma* of any famous Sect? Was it ever a disputable point, whether Injustice, Adultery, and other Sensuality, were Vices or Vertues? Did ever any Man think he should do God good service by complying with these? nay, is it not evident, that the Men we speak of contradict the very Principles of Reason, the Intimations of their own Consciences? they violate all the laws of Wisdom, go cross to all rules of Prudence; nay, their very Interests, and the principles of Self-preservation. May we not therefore direct our discourse to such Men, as *Herod* is said to have done a Letter to *Cassius*, Ἡρῴδης Κασσίῳ χαίρειν, in short, *Cassius thou art mad?*

But let us come to particulars, and we will begin with Injustice: hath not God said, *that the unrighteous shall have no inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ or of God?* and have we not seen the experiment of those that have raked and torn for riches

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as if that were the only thing valuable and deſirable, and counted all clear gain that could be gotten, who yet when death hath ſummoned them to the righteous Tribunal of God, would gladly have refunded all again, and have choſen to have lived the pooreſt life in the world, ſo they might have gone out of it with a good Conſcience? Is there not juſt reaſon to expect that all unjuſt acquiſitions will one day prove like a barbed Arrow in a Man's fleſh, that muſt either be pluckt back again, (and that not to be done without horrible pain and anguiſh) or elſe will deſtroy him eternally? Are not theſe courſes condemn'd by Heathens, and by all the reaſon of Mankind? Doth not ſuch a Man make himſelf the hate and ſcorn of others, and a ſhame to himſelf? What is there then prevails with any Man to continue ſuch a practice? Is there any neceſſity preſſes him to it? muſt a Man be ſtarved elſe? Is there any ſuch unſpeakable felicity in being rich, that the temptations thereof are irreſiſtible? Doth any Man live more comfortably by his ill-gotten goods? nay, in truth, theſe imbitter the delights of all the reſt. Doth Riches afford a Man ſuch ſecurity, quiet and repoſe, that no Man can be at eaſe till he have attained it; or is it not certain on the contrary, that the ſolicitude of acquiring it macerates a Man with cares and projects night and day; and when he hath attained his ends, he lies at once under the joint inconveniencies of abundance and of poverty; the cares of the one, and the burden of the other? Wherefore, upon the whole matter, there is nothing in the caſe but the impetuouſneſs of a greedy graſping humour, that bears down his reaſon, fools him and deſtroys him. And if a milder name than Madneſs be due to this condition, let ſober Men judge.

Now take the voluptuous Man, to whom no fruit is pleaſant but that which is forbidden, and who knows no meaſure of pleaſure but a Surfeit; in the firſt place it is very doubtful whether the queſt of pleaſures be not as troubleſome as the enjoyments of them are ſweet; at leaſt if we lay together the tedious expectations, the frequent fruſtrations, the certain expence of time, fortune and health, the ſecret guilt, the conſtant fear of detection, the ſhame and reproach upon diſcovery, the preſſing importunities of Paſſion before enjoyment, the follies and dangers in the midſt, and the irkſomneſs and loathing after their gratification: the little time of pleaſure, and the long hours of ſhame and repentance, the dull reliſh of the bodily ſenſes, to the quick and pugnent ſenſe of the Mind and Conſcience; we ſhall be put out of doubt, and aſſured of the unreaſonableneſs of ſuch a courſe. But if we conſider withal the ſevere denunciations of the Almighty, the inconſiſtency of ſuch a courſe with any intereſt in the joys of another life, the no compare between a Fool's paradiſe of Senſuality and the felicities of the Kingdom of Heaven, we cannot pronounce of ſuch a Man as (notwithſtanding all theſe conſiderations) ſhall give himſelf up to theſe brutiſh paſſions, otherwiſe than that he hath forfeited his Reaſon, forgoing his greateſt intereſt for the verieſt trifle, and ſelling his birth-right for a meſs of pottage.

The like may be ſaid of Drunkenneſs: To ſee a Man tun up himſelf like a barrel, and fill his head with froth, which his tongue diſcharges again; to ſee a Man's face deformed, his eyes ſtaring, his feet faultering, his motions antick, his thoughts open and undecent, his ſpeech much, and

and reaſon little; and herewith to obſerve his eſtate poured down a common ſewer, and his credit and reputation utterly ruined; but above all, his ſoul endangered to come into everlaſting burnings, and all this for the love of drink: who can chuſe but in his thoughts ſcore up ſuch a Man as fit for *Bethlehem?*

Let us take only one inſtance more, and that ſhall be in that paſſion which hath gotten the name from all the reſt, I mean Anger. Every man knoweth that health is beſt preſerved by calmneſs and evenneſs of mind, that Mens intereſt is beſt ſecured by gentleneſs and an obliging temper, their ſafety by ceſſion and placableneſs, that reaſon is higheſt when rage is down; that buſineſs is beſt carried on by the moſt ſedate proſecution; inſomuch that no Men count him wiſe whom they obſerve to be violent, nor do they think thoſe to be valiant that they ſee huff and ſwagger. Beſides, paſſion diſguiſes a Man's very countenance, dries up his body, brings wrinkles upon his face, gray hairs upon his head, hollowneſs of eyes, withers and deſtroys him: it puts him upon the moſt fooliſh, ſhameful, and dangerous adventures, which at the ſame time it uſually renders him impotent to effect, or if he effect them, he only makes matter for his own repentance as long as he lives; or it may be work for the Executioner to ſhorten his unhappy days. Above all, it is contrary to the nature of God who is a God of peace, to the temper of the bleſſed *Jeſus*, who was an example of meekneſs and patience; it utterly unfits a Man for the peaceful and amicable ſociety of Saints and Angels in the Kingdom of Heaven, and diſpoſes him for the horrid fellowſhip of fell and deſperate Fiends in the Regions below. All

which things considered, when we see a Man boil with choler, foam with rage, pale with envy, and indulging himself in this humour; what can we say or think of this Man but that he hath lost the τὸ ἡγεμονικὸν, the very principles of Manhood?

But perhaps it may be said, that all this while we have but maintained a Stoical Paradox; and for all this that hath been said, vicious Men cannot be reputed mad, because upon other occasions we see many of them give proof of wit and parts. To which I answer, that neither do I in all this intend to intimate, that they are in all respects mad, (though it were well for many of them that it were strictly true.) But when Men shall betray the most egregious folly, and act the most extravagantly in the matters of greatest moment, I may leave it to themselves in their sober moods to judge what name they ought to be called by, whatever ingenie they may discover in lesser occasions. Besides, neither is it the condition of all those that are acknowledged mad, to do nothing soberly or ingeniously; all or most have their lucid intervals, and there are some in whom the humour betrays it self in some peculiar instances only. *Melancholici quoad hoc*, (as they say.) Talk with them in the general and they are like other Men, but touch upon some peculiar point and they rave presently. So it is with these Men we speak of: As to common conversation and the affairs of the world they may be ingenious, and perhaps in some repartee, or other trifle, (by reason of the heat of their Spirits aforesaid) beyond other Men; but as to the business of their Souls and Eternity, they have no manly sense at all. And indeed, there is nothing

thing can be more pat to varify what I have been ſaying than this very circumſtance; for when Men that otherwiſe have ſenſe and underſtanding in leſſer matters ſhall be ſo extreamly abſurd in that which eſpecially requires the moſt manly proceedings, it is the very ſymptom that we have been all this while deſcribing.

Which being ſo, the conſequence is, that in the firſt place it is an abſurdity next to theirs to follow the counſel or example of ſuch Men. The Pſalmiſt makes it the firſt ſtep to felicity, not to *ſtand in the counſel of the ungodly.* Will any Man think it reaſonable to imitate the mad freaks of a *Bedlam*, becauſe he ſees him jolly and brisk when he plays them? no more let any Man encourage himſelf in wickedneſs, becauſe he ſees the high rants of Sinners: rather let him ſay in the words of our Saviour, *Father forgive them, they know what they do.* Fools they are with a witneſs that make a mock of ſin; little do they think how ill this jollity becomes them, and leſs do they forethink what will be the end of ſuch courſes.

Nor let the authority of the number or quality of ſuch perſons bear us down, for folly is folly, let who will be the Patron of it. Can precedent change the nature of things? is there any preſcription againſt reaſon? will publick vogue juſtify conſcience, or multitude of voices carry it againſt God? unleſs wicked Men could not only efface the principles of their own minds and conſciences, but alſo remove the pillars of the world, change the courſe of nature, and by a Gygantick enterpriſe wage war againſt and conquer Heaven; *i. e.* force the Almighty to alter his opinion, repeal his laws, and revoke his threatnings: ſin will

everlaſtingly be folly, and perſeverance therein madneſs, in ſpight of multitude, faſhion, cuſtom and example. Shall I therefore follow their examples that thwart God, that contradict their own Conſciences, whom all Men at leaſt tacitly condemn, even thoſe that brutiſhly and fillily are led by them? Shall I make thoſe my guide who have ſo little foreſight as not to ſee beyond the ſhort ſtage of Life? Shall I make them my Counſellors that make ſo fooliſh a bargain, as to give eternal life in exchange for momentary pleaſure? that have ſo bad Memories as to forget they have immortal Souls, or ſo little Reaſon as to think there is no God? In a word, Shall I take them for wiſe Men that have ſo little of Man in them as to live like Beaſts, and to wiſh they might die ſo too? Or (which equals any of the former) that can be ſo ſottiſh as to imagine they can go on in a courſe of Rebellion againſt God, and eſcape eternal deſtruction?

Again Secondly, upon the Premiſes it is mighty reaſonable, that every Man in this condition ſhould in his lucid Intervals apply himſelf moſt effectually to the means of recovery. 'Tis not the cuſtom of Phyſicians to adminiſter Remedies in a Paroxiſm (but ſuch as may abate the Symptoms only) becauſe Nature is then perverted and out of order to comply with the help offered to it; and it were Madneſs little inferiour to that of theſe ſpiritual Lunaticks we ſpeak of, to deal with them in the heat and rage of their paſſion, as to reprove a Man when he is drunk, to preach Meekneſs to a Man in a fury, *&c.* all we can do then is to pity and pray for them. But when the Fit is over, and the Patient

Patient in a ſedate temper, then is the time for application; and it is the greateſt uncharitableneſs in the World not to help them what we can, or to forbear to admoniſh them as the Angel did *Lot* when he had drawn him out of *Sodom*, *Eſcape for thy life, look not back*, &c. But eſpecially when the Sinner is in his right mind, apprehenſive of his former folly, ſees the emptineſs of what he ſo eagerly purſued, nauſeates his own choice, and either feels or foreſees the conſequence of it; then is the only time for him to call in his thoughts, to deplore his unreaſonableneſs, to ſhame himſelf and feel remorſe for his wickedneſs, to take a juſt meaſure of things, to renew his vows, to fortifie his reſolutions, to beg God's grace, and to lay all the obligations poſſible upon himſelf, to withſtand all the occaſions of relapſing. To which purpoſe let him conſider with himſelf, " It was God's unſpeak-
" able patience and mercy to me, that I was not
" ſnatch'd away in the midſt of my riot and de-
" bauch. I that abuſed ſo much Goodneſs, broke
" ſo righteous a Law, and affronted ſo great a
" Majeſty, it had been juſt with God to have
" cut off the thread of my life and let me drop
" into Hell. Oh what abſurd folly poſſeſſed me,
" that I duſt and aſhes ſhould oppoſe my Ma-
" ker! I that could not aſſure my ſelf of one
" moments life, ſhould yet live ſo as I durſt
" not die, or if I did, muſt expect to have been
" damned eternally! Or what if God ſparing my
" life had given me up to a reprobate mind, to a
" prophane ſpirit, had never ſolicited me by his
" Spirit, nor awakened my Conſcience more,
" but had ſaid, *Let him that is unjuſt, be unjuſt*
" *ſtill, and him that is filthy be filthy ſtill*, &c. and

" ſo I had gone blindfold to deſtruction? Bleſſed
" be his holy name, and happy is it for my poor
" Soul that I have lived to ſee my ſhame, feel
" my diſeaſe, and bewail my folly. O my Soul
" *ſin no more, leſt a worſe thing happen to thee.*

And this brings me to the Second Part of the Parable, *(viz.)* The Prodigal's return.

THE

# THE *Penitent Pardoned:* OR, A DISCOURSE OF THE NATURE of SIN, AND THE EFFICACY of REPENTANCE, Under the Parable *of the* Prodigal Son.

## PART II.

### The Penitent, or the Prodigal returning.

S. Luke 15. Verſ. 17, 18, 19, 20, 21.

*And when he came to himſelf, he ſaid, How many hired Servants of my Father's have bread enough and to ſpare, and I periſh with hunger.*

*I will ariſe and go to my Father, and will ſay unto him, Father, I have ſinned againſt Heaven and before thee,*

*And*

*And am no more worthy to be called thy Son: make me as one of thy hired Servants.*

*And he aroſe, and came to his Father. But when he was yet a great way off, his Father ſaw him, and had compaſſion, and ran and fell on his neck, and kiſſed him.*

*And the Son ſaid to him, Father, I have ſinned againſt heaven, and in thy ſight, and am no more worthy to be called thy Son.*

## CHAP. I.

## Of Conſideration.

### The CONTENTS.

§. I. *The general concern of Repentance. The reaſon why, notwithſtanding, there is little mention made of it in the Law of* Moſes. *The peculiar neceſſity of it to thoſe who have been great Sinners: the parts thereof as they are alluded to in this Parable.*

§. II. *Of the nature of Conſideration; and that it uſually begins Converſion.*

§. III. *Affliction uſually brings Men to Conſideration, Proſperity commonly rendring them either light and incogitant, or confident and preſumptuous.*

§. IV. *The peculiar Meditations of a returning Sinner.*

HItherto, in the former part of the Parable, in the perſon of a light incogitant young Man, we have ſeen the deplorable effects of Raſhneſs and Folly, Pride and Curioſity, Inſolence and Diſobedience, how they work jointly and ſeverally, together and by turns, till by degrees they have trained him on to his utter ruin. His Pride raiſes him ſo high that he muſt fall, his Licentiouſneſs betrays

betrays him to Slavery, and his Luxury to extreme Neceſſity. And under this Type we have ſeen lively pourtrayed the Beginnings, the Progreſs, the Upſhot, the Cauſes and the Effects of a ſinful courſe.

It was high time for the Prodigal to think of returning to his Father, when he was periſhing by his Diſobedience, and had no other refuge but in his Father's Clemency; and ſure it is time for the Sinner to repent and return to God, when (if he be ſenſible of any thing) he cannot but be apprehenſive that in the courſe he is in, the danger of his eternal ruin is as certainly impendent as it is more intolerable.

And thus far we have ſadly obſerved the ſteps of deſcent towards Hell: we come now in this ſecond Part to deſcry the way of Recovery, to trace out a plain path towards Heaven: that is, to lay open the Beginnings, the Motives, the whole Nature and Proceſs of Repentance. And the divine Wiſdom of our Saviour hath ſo contrived this Parable, that all the Lines of this great Work are as plainly diſcernible in the Narrative of the Prodigal's Return, as we have already ſeen the Progreſs of Sin delineated in his former Extravagancy. Wherefore as I cannot but hope that the genuine efficacy of plain truth, eſpecially invigorated by ſo curious a ſcheme, as in the former part of our Saviour's Diſcourſe, muſt needs have put every Man into ſome concern who hath ſtained his Conſcience with guilt, but not quite extinguiſhed it: ſo I ſee leſs cauſe to doubt but that this Second Part will be very acceptable and uſeful to all thoſe upon whom the former made any impreſſion. For if he that could pretend to be able to direct thoſe who have bankrupt their Fortunes, how they might certainly repair their Loſſes, and redintegrate their Eſtates,

eſtates, ſhould be ſure to have a great many attentive Auditors; and he that ſhould undertake the cure of thoſe that have received the ſentence of death within themſelves, and have been given up as no longer Men of this world, would be ſure to have good ſtore of Patients: there is far greater reaſon to expect that ſuch a diſcourſe as pretends to give relief to guilty Conſciences, to open a ſure port for all troubled Souls, ſhould find acceptance with all ſuch as are not in the very extremity of one of thoſe fits of madneſs we lately ſpoke of.

*Cum ipſe omnium notarum ſim peccator & nulli rei natus niſi pœnitentiæ, non facile poſſum ſuper illa tacere, quam ipſe quoq; & ſtirpis humanæ, & offenſæ in dominum princeps Adam exomologeſi reſtitutus in Paradicum ſuum non tacet,*

*Tertullian* writing a diſcourſe of the nature and efficacy of repentance, gives this ſerious account of ſo doing in the latter end of the Treatiſe. *Being conſcious* (ſaith he) *to my ſelf that I am a great ſinner, I cannot eaſily be ſilent concerning repentance, eſpecially ſince it is preached and recommended to all poſterity by our firſt Parent* Adam, *as that which he found by experience to have been the only expedient of reſtoring him again to Paradiſe, after he had ſinned againſt God.* And not only our firſt Parents but all their Off-ſpring have been ſenſible of the neceſſity of repentance, *foraſmuch as all have ſinned, and come ſhort of the glory of God, and if God ſhould be extreme to mark what is done amiſs, no Man living could be juſtified.*

Repentance is (as the ſame Author calls it,) the *Pharos* or Watch-tower, which gives light by night to thoſe who are bewildred by their own vanity and the illuſion of the Devil, and are ready to ſink of their own leaks. 'Tis the great *Aſylum* and Sanctuary of humane infirmity, the Port of a troubled Soul, a Plank to a ſhip-wrackt Conſcience a Soveraign Plaiſter to the Sore and Wounded,

Phyſick

Phyſick to the Sick, nay, life from the dead, and reſurrection from the Grave. Repentance is the miracle of divine goodneſs, the reconciler of the divine Attributes, Juſtice and Mercy; the relief and ſuccour of humane frailty, the envy of Devils as that which they cannot attain to, and the peculiar and ineſtimable privilege of Mankind, that which their amendment, comfort and eternal ſalvation depends upon.

Therefore it may juſtly ſeem a wonder that the Law of *Moſes* takes little or no notice of it, but the reaſon is, becauſe the Moſaical inſtitution at leaſt in the letter of it was never intended as the method of attaining eternal life, but principally as a Political Law, and accordingly it takes notice only of matter of fact, allows no retrieval, but ſaith, *Curſed is he that continues not in all things that are written in the book of the Law to do them.* But the Prophets all along earneſtly recommend repentance; with this both our Saviour and S. *John* Baptiſt began their Preaching, and indeed this is the ſumm of the whole Goſpel, That God will *wink at the times of former ignorance, and now commands all Men every where to repent, becauſe he hath appointed a day wherein he will judge the world in righteouſneſs*, &c. Act. 17. 30, 31.

It is true, (as we have intimated already) all have not the ſame neceſſity of repentance, or at leaſt not of the ſame meaſures and circumſtances, becauſe all have not run the ſame riſk of folly, nor blackned their Souls with the ſame enormous commiſſions that ſome others have, and therefore cannot have bitter reflexions for which they have given no cauſe, nor can find ſuch difficulty of recovering themſelves, having never been habituated to a courſe of ſin, and therefore as

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our Saviour said, *He came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance:* so we intend not this discourse principally for such persons; but for those that have run a long course of notorious Sin, that have provoked God, offended their Conscience, deformed their Natures, and put themselves under just and dreadful apprehensions of a sad account hereafter: it is the infinite concern of such Men, if they do not desperately abondon themselves to eternal misery, to attend to this happy expedient which now I am to explain.

To come therefore to the business. Our Saviour in the part of the Parable before us, represents the Prodigal making his retreat in this order.

1. He becomes a thinking and considerative person, and debates his own case with himself. *When he came to himself he said, How many hired servants of my Fathers*, &c. Before he drove on furiously, considering nothing present, reflecting on nothing past, nor regarding any thing that might come after: now he grows cool, reasons the case, and deliberates what is like to be the issue of his present state, and what is fittest to be done for the future. And thus the penitent Sinner; the first essay of Repentance is a relenting thoughtfulness, a serious and pensive considerateness. As soon as he is gotten out of the noise of the World, the charms of Pleasure, and the hurry of his own Passions, he sits down and considers, he practises to see with his own eyes, and not be led by rumour and example; he exercises his Reason, and resolves to judge impartially of things: and from this point of time the first conceptions of Good in him bear date.

2. From the aforesaid Deliberation he proceeds to Resolution. *I will arise and go to my Father, and say unto him*, &c. *q. d.* "I foolishly hurried on hi-

"therto,

" therto, and was upon the brink of deſtruction be-
" fore I apprehended my danger; I dream'd of new
" diſcoveries, of freſh pleaſures in my bold Adven-
" tures, but I now perceive there is but one way
" with me, I muſt try my Father's Clemency or
" periſh. Whether he will receive me or no, I
" cannot tell; but that I find muſt be the way
" or none, therefore I will make the experiment:
" it is better to retract my folly and live, than ob-
" ſtinately to maintain my poſt, and die miſerably;
" there is ſome hope this way, and none at all the
" other: therefore *jacta eſt alea, I will return.*
Thus alſo the penitent Sinner: " Now (ſaith he)
" mine eyes are opened, and though very late, yet
" now at laſt I ſee my danger, and bleſſed be God
" that I ſee whither I was going, before the caſe
" be utterly deſperate: I am ſure to be damn'd if
" I continue my courſe, whatever come on't there-
" fore I'll return. Whatſoever diſcouragements
" for my acceptance my former rebellions ſet be-
" fore me; or whatſoever difficulty there may be
" for an old habituate Sinner to change his biaſs,
" I am reſolved however, not to periſh fooliſhly,
" with my hands folded up in my boſom: I will
" ariſe, I will try.

3. This reſolution is followed by execution and actual returning *So he aroſe and went to his Father.* He that conſiders and comes to no reſolution, is like the man that ploughs his ground but ſows nothing upon it; and he that reſolves, but executes not, is yet more ſottiſh; for he is at all the coſt, and takes all the pains, but reaps no fruit of his labours. There is ſuch a near connexion between Conſideration, Reſolution, and Execution, and they are ſo naturally conſequent upon one another, that as on the one ſide Conſideration brings on

on reſolution, and that practice; ſo much more on the other, from a Man's practice we may ordinarily pronounce of his reſolutions, and from that certainly calculate his meditations. But to the point in hand: "I (ſaith the Prodigal) have de-"layed too long already, I may conſider and make "reſolutions, and yet ſit and ſtarve; it muſt be "doing muſt reſcue me from my miſery. *So he aroſe.* And ſo doth the true Penitent.

But theſe things are not to be paſſed over thus ſuperficially, therefore we will handle them particularly. And accordingly,

§. II. I begin with the firſt, *viz.* Conſideration or Deliberation. By which I mean not a mopiſh and ineffective dozineſs, when Men ſeem to think profoundly, but apprehend nothing at all diſtinctly; their underſtandings being amuſed and baffled with a new and ſtrange proſpect, as if looking back upon their former miſcarriages had (with *Lot*'s Wife) transformed them into a Pillar of Salt. Much leſs do I mean a ſolemn auſterity of temper, and rigid fixation of ſpirits; as if Men had forgone all touches of humanity, and were become a kind of walking Ghoſts. Both theſe are paſſions of the body, not motions of the mind, and if they are not counterfeit, tend more to Deſperation than Converſion; and there is danger leſt ſuch Men are falling from a vicious Frenzy (as we not long ſince called it) to a ſtrictly literal, and more incurable Madneſs.

But by Conſideration, ſo far as concerns the buſineſs in hand, I underſtand nothing more nor leſs, but a manly and a ſerious application of our minds to take a juſt and impartial view of our ſelves, and of all ſuch things as moſt concern us, to the end that

that we may govern our determinations and carriage accordingly. For the fuller apprehenſion of this, we are to remember ( what I have in part intimated before ) that the Mind of Man hath theſe four Privileges.

1. It hath not only a perceptive power of ſuch things as are preſent, which is common to the inferiour and animal faculties, but hath a large ſphere of cognizance, recalling things paſt, and having a ſolicitude and fore-thought of things to come. *Hoc uno à beſtiis plurimùm differunt homines, quod rationem habeant à naturâ, mentemque datam & acrem, & vigentem, celerrimèque multa ſimul agitantem, & (ut ita dicam) ſagacem, quæ & cauſas rerum, & conſecutiones videat, & ſimilitudines transferat, & diſjuncta conjungat, & cum præſentibus futura copulet, omnemque complectatur vitæ conſequentis ſtatum,* &c. Cic. de finib. lib. 2.

2. The rational powers of the Soul are not merely paſſive as the inferiour are, which only take notice of ſuch Images of things in *tranſitu* and glance, as are reflected upon them from the Senſes, but theſe can fix themſelves, and their objects can hold the Images of things ſteddy, and ſtay and arreſt their own motions towards them.

3. The mind of Man doth not take ſo ſuperficial a view of things, as to diſcern only the pleaſantneſs or unpleaſantneſs of them, wherein natural good and evil conſiſts, but is able to diſcern and pronounce of an higher and more exquiſite beauty or deformity, excellency or turpitude from the relation to God, to the community, to the nature of our own Souls, and to the time to come; wherein conſiſts that which we call moral good and evil. And this is that rational ſenſe or reliſh, the *Criterion* or ſtandard of the Soul I formerly ſpoke of.

Laſtly, The Soul is able alſo to reflect upon it ſelf, to meaſure its own motions, and its own ſtate,

by the ſtandard aforeſaid; and ſo becomes aware of, and corrects its own errours for the time paſt, and takes better aim for the time to come.

Now the exerciſing of theſe ſeveral capacities of the Soul, is that which we mean by Conſideration. Namely, then a Man conſiders when in the firſt place he ſuffers not himſelf to be carried away with the prejudice of ſenſe, nor confines his thoughts to ſuch things as are thereby preſented to him; but inlarges his proſpect, looks round about him, takes one thing with another, and embraces in his mind the whole nature, tendency, and all the circumſtances of things. This is well intimated by the *Latins* in either of theſe words, *Contemplari* and *Conſiderare*, which ſeem to allude to Aſtronomical Calculations, wherein Men ought not *ad pauca reſpicere*, to confine their obſervations to ſome one appearance, but to look round about them, to ſurvey the whole Orb, and ſalve all the *Phænomena*. Thus a Man conſiders morally that obſerves his own actions, that recollects what hath befallen himſelf, or other Men upon ſo doing, and forecaſts what may befall him or them hereafter.

Again, When a Man lives not *extempore*, but premeditates, nor ſuffers himſelf to be over-born, either by the preſence and importunity of ſenſual objects, or by the ſolicitation and hurry of paſſions, but checks his own carriere, and gives himſelf leiſure calmly, and maturely to underſtand the juſt nature of things, defixes his thoughts, and ſuſpends his determination till he ſee plain reaſon to incline him this way, or that; this is a conſiderative Man. Eſpecially, when a Man takes not things in the groſs, as if all were alike trivial, or alike momentous, nor ſuffers himſelf to be led along by common cuſtom, opinion and example; that takes

takes not the price of things from publick fame, but appeals to and eſtimates all things by the juſt ſtandard of reaſon, and accordingly governs his deſires and proſecutions: The Man, I ſay, that diſtinguiſhes and makes a diſcrimination betwixt one thing and another, that goes not by tale and number, but by weight and proof; is juſtly eſteemed a thinking and ſerious perſon. For ſo the *Greek* words uſed in this caſe import. Διαλογισμὸς, διακεῖνω, ſignifying *to confer*, *compare*, and *diſtinguiſh*: as alſo λογίζομαι, *to ſtate the matter*, *to caſt up accounts*; and ſo alſo the *Latin* word *deliberare*, which *Feſtus* derives from *Libra*, as, *deciding the matter by the ſcale*; in like manner, *examinare*, *to obſerve*, *quâ lanx exeat*, *which way the ſcale turns*.

Laſtly, When a Man turns his eyes inward, ſtudies himſelf, makes himſelf his theam, and comments upon himſelf and his own actions, hath his eyes in his head, minding his own way, having propounded a deſtined mark and aim of his actions; keeps it conſtantly in his eye, and ſhapes his courſe accordingly; not like the fool in the Proverbs of *Solomon*, that hath his eyes roving, and *in the ends of the Earth*. This is that the *Hebrews* expreſs by the phraſe לב שית, *to lay to heart*; or in the other phraſe of the Pſalmiſt, *Pſal.* 4. 4. *To commune with ones own heart*. This is that which we mean by Conſiderativeneſs, or in other words, the working of Conſcience, and the diſcharge of both its offices.

And by ſuch kind of Conſideration as this, doth the Grace of God and his holy Spirit begin the work of Converſion; and herein do the firſt ſtrictures and eſſays of piety diſcover themſelves.

It was wont to be ſaid by the *Platoniſts*, that knowledge is nothing but remembrance, and that

all the discovery of truth, which we in this state are able with all our labour and diligence to make, is but a revival and recovery of those Ideas of things we had in a former state, and which now became obscure and confused by our being immersed in matter and body. But let that be as it may, it is true in the present case, that the first point of true practical wisdom is gained by studying a Man's self, and by making himself the subject of his meditations. For as there is nothing wherein we betray more folly, nothing by which we ship-wrack our Consciences, and lose our selves so fatally, as by permitting our selves to run adrift without Card or Compass, Port or Pilot; so on the other hand, there is nothing gives greater hopes of recovery, than being able and disposed to recollect our selves, to call in our thoughts by serious consideration and reflexion. To which purpose it was worthily said by *Philo*, *That the source of all our danger, and the first reason of our miscarriages, lay in our running on with the boisterous tide of passion; and the first hopes of safety was in being able to stay our selves, and soberly to reason the matter.* But we have greater authority for it than *Philo*'s. For upon defect of this, God himself lays the blame of Men's ruine; and in this he places the first signs of recovery. So we find him complaining of his people *Israel*, as in a very desperate condition, *Isa.* 1. 3. *My people will not consider:* and therefore often calls upon them by the Prophets in these words, *Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Consider your ways.* But most emphatically doth he express himself, *Isa.* 46. 8. *Remember and shew your selves men: bring it again to mind, O ye transgressors.* And it is very observable, that in that famous Chapter, *Ezek.* 18. where above any other passage

Πηγὴν τῶν ἁμαρτημάτων, θυμὸν, λογισμὸν ὑποφθαμάτων.

paſſage in the Old Teſtament, God moſt ſolemnly proclaims and ratifies the efficacy of repentance, he deſcribes the firſt lines at leaſt of it to conſiſt in conſideration, *verſ.* 14. *A Son that conſidereth*, &c. Again, *verſ.* 28. *Becauſe he conſidereth and turneth*, &c. To all theſe add the advice of the Pſalmiſt, *Pſal.* 4. 4. *Stand in awe and ſin not; commune with your own hearts upon your bed, and be ſtill.* As if the ſerious treating with our ſelves was the only way, both to ſtifle the temptation to, and to extinguiſh the guilt of ſin. The Septuagint render the laſt phraſe of the Pſalmiſt, Κατανύγητε, *q. d.* conſider ſo ſeriouſly with your ſelves at your beſt retirements, the evil of your ways, and the danger of your courſe, that you may feel remorſe and compunction. The *Chaldee Targum* paraphraſeth thus, *Let your hearts concur with your mouths in ſaying your Prayers, and think of the day of death: q. d.* Affect your hearts ſeriouſly in ſecret with a deep apprehenſion of the danger of ſin.

And if we look into the New Teſtament, nothing can more illuſtriouſly ſet forth this which we are aſſerting, than thoſe two Parables of our Saviour, *Luke* 14. 28. &c. of the Man that intends to build a Tower, and a King going to war. In both which, the deſign of our Saviour is to ſhew, that ſerious debating, and prudent forecaſting all the difficulties of the whole courſe of Chriſtianity, is no leſs neceſſary to him that intends ſucceſsfully to undertake it, than thoſe grave deliberations of Princes, or projections of private perſons, when the one intends to enter into a dangerous war, and the other a coſtly building: and ſo likewiſe in the famous Parable of the Sower and Seed, *Matt.* 13. where the good ground that hath depth of Earth, repreſents thoſe perſons that ſeriouſly and profoundly conſider.

If indeed Conversion to God were nothing else but a meer melancholy qualm, or a fright: if I say repentance were only a Paroxysm of Devotion, and the Divine Majesty so soft and easie as to be taken with an agony of mind, or a kind of love-fit: then an inconsiderate Man might be esteemed a Penitent. But Repentance being nothing less than the change of a Man's whole temper and life, the entring into a whole course of severe and constant vertue, the subduing our most potent passions, the denying our selves some of the most pleasant gratifications of flesh and blood, the breaking off old and radicated customs and habits: It must be absolutely necessary, that whosoever goes through with it, do maturely consider the enterprize, and call in all his force for the atchievement of it.

Γνώμης δὲ οὐκ ἀνάγκης αἱ ἀρεταὶ ἅπασαι. *S.* Chrys. *loc. prius citat.*

Or again, If a Man could be so vain and unreasonable as to hope that God would save Men by force, do violence to their natures, over-bear or supersede their faculties, and plant grace in their hearts by a meer act of his omnipotency, and new make them after the manner he created them at first without their own concurrence, then indeed there would be no use of consideration; and it would be as fruitless and unnecessary to contribute any endeavour, as impossible to make any opposition. But those that dream at this rate, neither (1.) understand God nor themselves; neither what is fit for him to confer, nor for them to expect. (2.) They know not what vertue means, nor (3.) apprehend whence comfort arises. (4.) They consider not what a righteous judgment to come supposes, nor what the very notion of reward and punishment speaks. (5.) They make no difference between free and natural Agents, and condemn themselves to sensless and stupid Machines, in hopes

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to be made Saints *per ſaltum*, and to come at Heaven ſuch a way as never any Man did or can do; that is, without their own endeavour.

Or laſtly, If a Man could perſuade himſelf, that the means of Grace, (*viz.*) the Word and Sacraments did uſe to work phyſically upon Men, and made them good *ex opere operato*, (as ſome ſpeak) after the manner of Food and Medicine to the Body, which take place whether Men conſider it or no, (and oftentimes work the better the leſs the Mind is imployed in thinking of that or any thing elſe:) upon ſuch a ſuppoſition, there were no reaſon why any Man ſhould put himſelf to the trouble of that we have been ſpeaking of. But on the contrary, it is moſt certain, that all the means of Grace have effected upon Men's Souls, no otherwiſe than by awakening the ſenſe of the Mind, and making Men conſiderative, and then Men's hard Hearts are made contrite by operating upon themſelves, as the Diamond is known to be cut by its own duſt. For it is as impoſſible that Sermons, Counſels, or any other Diſcourſes, ſhould edifie the Mind of a Man, unleſs his Underſtanding bring them cloſe, and make application of them to his Conſcience, by the way of Conſideration; as it is for a Man's Body to be nouriſhed by Meats who hath no digeſtive faculty, or to be cured by Medicine, where all the powers of nature are extinguiſhed. In ſhort, to think otherwiſe, is to turn Devotion into Conjuring, and all the Divine Inſtitutions into Charms and Amulets.

And all this is ſo true, that nothing can be objected to it, but what will convince the objector of utter ſtrangeneſs and unacquaintedneſs with converting Grace; for we may ſafely appeal either to the experience of every ſuch Convert as we are

ſpeaking of, or to the obſervation of all thoſe who have taken notice of others in that condition, whether any thing hath been more remarkably viſible in ſuch a *Criſis*, than a penſive, ſerious, and conſiderative temper. And it were eaſie to bring abundance of egregious inſtances hereof; ſuch as *Juſtin Martyr*, St. *Auſtin*, and others: but to what I have ſaid already, I will only ſubjoin two or three Scriptural Obſervations. And the firſt ſhall be what *David* ſaith of himſelf, *Pſal.* 119. verſ. 59. *I thought upon my ways, and turned my feet to thy preceſts.* In the next place, I cannot but take notice in the ſtory of *Iſaac*, *Gen.* 24. 63. the Scripture ſaith of him, *He went out into the fields to meditate in the evening.* The LXX. render it, he went out διολεσχῆσαι, to talk with himſelf, to entertain diſcourſe with his own heart; and for the convenience of doing this, he choſe the ſolitude of the Fields, and the cool and quiet of the Evening. And by this practice the Holy Ghoſt characterizes him, as (though a young Man, yet) beginning to be both a wiſe and a pious perſon. Nor is it to be omitted which is recorded of *Ahab*, 1 *Kings* 21. 27. That when God threatned him with the utter extirpation of his family for his wickedneſs, he put on Sackcloth, ſprinkled himſelf with Aſhes, and eſpecially amongſt the reſt he walked ſoftly: that is, although he did not heartily repent, yet he knew well how to diſſemble the doing it, and acted the part of a penitent in that ſerious and conſiderative poſture. I will conclude this point with a paſſage of the Prophet *Jeremiah*, Chap. 31. verſ. 18, 19. The words are theſe: *I have ſurely heard Ephraim bemoaning himſelf thus, Thou haſt chaſtiſed me, and I was chaſtiſed; as a bullock unaccuſtomed to the yoke. Turn thou me and*

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*I ſhall be turned, for thou art the Lord my God. Surely after I was turned I repented, and after I was inſtructed I ſmote upon my thigh; I was aſhamed, yea even confounded, becauſe I did bear the reproach of my youth.* A memorable Scripture very full and appoſite to my preſent purpoſe, and withall ſo pathetick as that it is almoſt match for this Parable of our Saviour we have before us. The reflexion upon both which together lead me,

In the ſecond place to obſerve the occaſion, or what it was which put the Prodigal into a conſiderative temper; and that was the preſſure of his wants: whilſt wind and tide favoured him, and his affairs were proſperous, he made no reflexions, nor ſtruck ſail to any thing; but now the tide forſaking him he is becalmed, and then conſiders. In like manner,

§. III. It is uſually ſome affliction or other which firſt awakens habitual ſinners into conſideration, and the rudiments of piety and religion. Or as ſerious conſiderativeneſs begins converſion, ſo commonly ſome ſharp affliction or other begins that ſeriouſneſs. It cannot be doubted, but that the moſt eaſie and moſt frequently ſucceſsful way of begetting a ſenſe of God and of piety in the minds of Men, is by holy education in their youth, whilſt their hearts are tender and tractable, not prejudiced by actual ingagements, not confirmed by example, not hardned by long cuſtom

Upon this account it may ſeem that our Saviour, *Matth.* 5. 3, 4. pronounces the Poor and thoſe that mourn, bleſſed, becauſe adverſities diſpoſe Men to conſideration, and to repentance; whereas the rich and proſperous have ſo many temptations to perſiſt in their courſe, that our Saviour elſewhere pronounces it very hard for a rich Man to enter into the Kingdom of God. And this ſeems to be meant by the Apoſtle, 1 *Cor.* 5. 5. when he tells the *Corinthians*, they ſhould have delivered the inceſtuous perſon up to Satan for the deſtruction of the fleſh, that his Soul might be ſaved, *&c.* intimating, that ſome ſharp affliction was the likelieſt method of curing ſuch a perſon.

ſtom and practice; and when the Grace of God anticipates the Devil, and prevents all his enterpriſes: and perhaps, if we look over the ſtate of Mankind, we ſhall find amongſt thoſe that are ſincerely good, the number of thoſe that have become ſo after a long courſe of ſin, to be very ſmall in compariſon. We may alſo allow it for truth which is made a common maxim, that *ingenous Minds* are moſt wrought upon by obligation and favour, that the ſtrongeſt efforts are thoſe which are made by kindneſs and goodneſs, that this latter method will melt and diſſolve ſuch as would be broken in pieces by violence. But this prejudices not the buſineſs in hand, for we ſpeak of ſuch as have loſt their ingenuity; old hardned Sinners, who muſt firſt be broken by the hammer of Affliction before they will diſſolve by the benign warmth of Mercy and Kindneſs. Theſe laſt indeed, carry on the work and make a perfect change, but fear and pain uſually begins it. But I will not ſtick to grant, that perhaps it may fall out, that ſome old Sinner may have been reclaimed by the reading of a good Book, hearing a ſerious Sermon, or by the grave admonition of a faithful Friend, without any preſſing Affliction to prepare him for it, or as it were, extort it from him. Notwithſtanding, I verily believe, if an eſtimate could be taken, the inſtances of this kind would be found to be exceeding rare. We find *Pharaoh* and *Nebuchadnezzar* humbled by Adverſity, and their ſtiff Necks ſubmitted to thoſe acknowledgments of God's Power and Sovereignty, which no Kindneſs or Mercy would bring them to. And *Manaſſes* comes out a true Convert, a new Man out of the Furnace of Affliction. And *David* himſelf confeſſes of himſelf, *That before he was afflicted he went aſtray, but thereby he had learnt to keep*

*Elihu* diſcourſes admirably of the ſeveral Methods of the Divine Grace to reclaim Sinners, *Job* 33. from *v.* 14. to 26.

*keep God's Commandments*, Pſal. 119. verſ. 67. But the whole Scripture affords no one inſtance that I know of, of ſuch a perſon as we ſpeak of, cured by any other method than this. And for the whole Nation of the *Jews*, God himſelf ſaith thus, *Hoſ.* 5. 15. *I will go and return to my place till they acknowledge their tranſgreſſion and ſeek my face. In their Affliction they will ſeek me early*, q. d. "I "will not only afflict my People, but I will leave "them under the preſſure thereof; and by this "rack, as it were extort from them a confeſſion "of my Sovereignty and their own Guilt: for I "have found by long trial, that nothing elſe will "work upon a ſtiff-necked Generation, but in "their Affliction I am ſure, they will earneſtly "and inſtantly ſeek after me.

It was not the peculiar jealouſie of *Fabius* concerning the *Roman* State, which made him ſay, *Se ſecunda magis quàm adverſa timere, That their danger was greater, leſt they ſhould become raſh and confident by ſome ſlight ſucceſſes, than that their Spirits ſhould be broken by diſaſter.* For all Men that underſtand themſelves, and value their ſafety above their pleaſure, find they have reaſon more to ſuſpect the ſoft charms of eaſe, peace and plenty, than the rough attacks of adverſity. Becauſe amongſt other things, a conſtant and ſtiff gale of proſperity carries Men with too full ſail to be checkt or controuled by counſel: it preſents them with too many and great temptations to be eaſily reſiſted, miniſters to their confident preſumption, that either they are good enough already, becauſe they have ſo many arguments of the divine favour, or at leaſt that he overlooks their miſcarriages. And Conſcience is either out-faced, or hath been ſo often ſilenced and baffled, that it dares ſcarce mutter till the

apprehenſion

apprehenſion of ſome great danger or miſery authorize and provoke it: but then it recovers its ſpeech and tells its errand.

To this purpoſe we have a famous inſtance in the Brethren of *Joſeph*, *Gen.* 37. They (prompted by envy) had maliciouſly plotted the death, or at leaſt the perpetual ſervitude of their Brother; and proceeding ſo far in it, that to their thinking it had taken effect. Then they unworthily contrive to abuſe the affections of their good old Father, with feigned probabilities that his beloved Son was devoured by wild Beaſts. And now they thought all was well, they had reaked their malice and concealed their guilt, they kept their countenances, fed upon the ſweets of revenge, and all this while their Conſcience felt no regret. Till at laſt, (as God would have it) they themſelves fall into the hands of him they thought they had made away; their neceſſities compel them to go down to *Ægypt*, and there the Man, the Governour of the Land lookt ſternly upon them, pretends to take them for ſpies, and threatens to deal ſeverely with them. Then courage fails them, and Conſcience recovers: *We are verily guilty* (ſay they) *of the blood of our Brother, when we ſaw the anguiſh of his Soul*, &c. What is the matter now, what alters the caſe, how comes *Joſeph* to their minds now, who had been ſo long forgotten? Now they find they ſtand in need of mercy, and therefore ſadly remember how mercileſs they had been before; now they pity poor *Joſeph*, for whom before they had no compaſſion; now they have bowels, when their own caſe was ſad, and their puniſhment leads them to a remembrance of their guilt.

Thus we ſee affliction, if it doth not make Men good, yet at leaſt it will not ſuffer them to be at eaſe

eaſe in their ſin, and ſo diſpoſes them towards repentance. But contrariwiſe, proſperity raiſes the paſſions and depreſſes Conſcience: it hath made many from hopeful and tolerable, become bad and intolerable, but ſcarcely ever improved any from bad to good. It is a well known ſtory of *Zeno*, who was as intent as any other Man upon the amaſſing of wealth, and as much taken with the gaity of the world ſo long as his Merchandize ſucceeded: but when he ſhipwrack'd his Fortunes he recovered his reaſon, and applied himſelf to the ſtudy of Philoſophy and the inriching of his mind, *Naufragio tutus & fœlix infortunio*, his undoing was his making, and his misfortune proved his recovery. And this the Holy Pſalmiſt obſerves to be a common caſe, for *Pſal.* 55. 19. he gives this account of Men's obſtinate impiety, *becauſe* (ſaith he) *they have no changes, therefore they fear not God.* And Saint *Peter* alſo, 2 *Pet.* 3. 4. repreſents it as the common argument upon which ſuch Men incourage themſelves in the contempt of all Religion, *where* (ſay they) *is the promiſe of his coming? for ſince the Fathers fell aſleep, all things continue as they were*, &c. as if he had ſaid, Whilſt there were viſible interpoſitions of the Divine Providence in the world, and that God was wont preſently by ſome remarkable judgment or other to revenge himſelf upon thoſe that violated his Laws and affronted his Majeſty, ſo long the world was kept in ſome awe, and Religion reverenced; but from ſuch times as there hath been a conſtant calm and no interruption of the courſe of common cauſes, Men have called in queſtion, whether there be any Providence at all in this world? and if once they can perſuade themſelves God hath left off to mind the affairs of the preſent world, they will confi-

dently

dently and with ſome colour of reaſon infer, that then he will not call things to account hereafter. Wherefore it is the uſual method of the Divine Wiſdom, to make way for the reaſons and motives of Religion by Affliction: firſt ſoftning the obdurate Heart by ſome ſharp croſs, taking down the pride, confuting the atheiſm, curing the wantonneſs and delicacy of Men's tempers, and ſo bringing them to a cool and thoughtful condition; and to reaſon with themſelves as the Prodigal in the Text.

*Andronicus Rhodius* diſcourſes excellently to this purpoſe, that Ἀσωτία prodigality and licentious living, hath amongſt many miſchiefs, yet theſe few good circumſtances. 1. οὐ δύναται παραμένειν, it cannot laſt long, but will quickly exhauſt the ſtock that feeds it; and then, 2. ὑπὸ τῆς ἡλικίας καὶ ὑπὸ τῆς πείρας τῶν ἀπὸ τῆς ἀπορίας κακῶν ἐαθῆναι τὸν ἄσωτον, &c. the miſeries he brings upon himſelf by his extravancy, may be a likely means to bring him to ſee his errour, and amend. *In Ethic. Nicomach. lib. 4. c. 2.*

From all which, we learn both the hardneſs of a vicious Heart, in that nothing can pierce it but Affliction, and alſo the blindneſs and folly of Men, who ſo paſſionately deſire Proſperity, together with the great uſefulneſs of Affliction: and from all theſe, that it proceeds not from harſhneſs and ſeverity in God that he ſends Calamities upon the Sons of Men, but there is an illuſtrious inſtance of his Wiſdom, and of his Goodneſs, in thoſe providential diſpenſations, ſince this is the only way of recovering and making Men good and happy.

§. IV. Let us now ſee in the laſt place, ſomewhat particularly, what are the conſiderations the Prodigal entertains his thoughts upon in this his afflicted condition. And conſulting the Text, and carrying along with us a juſt notion of the nature of the caſe, we ſhall find thoſe reducible to theſe four points.

1. He

1. He conſiders what the condition was he is fallen from, and how happy he might have been, had it not been for his own folly. *How many hired Servants*, &c. *q.d.* "I that am pinched with want now, "felt none in my Father's Houſe; I was liberally maintained, honourably treated, wanted nothing but the wiſdom to underſtand my own felicity, and in this condition I might have continued: for neither did my Father's Eſtate complain of the burden of my Accommodations, nor was he ſtrait-handed, or abated any thing of his Fatherly Affections towards me; it was nothing but my own Folly ruined me. And then,

2. He proceeds to deplore the ſad eſtate he is fallen into: "When I ſet out from my Father's Houſe in queſt of Liberty, did I ever dream of becoming a Slave? When I deſpiſed the liberal proviſions of his Family, did I or could I have thought I ſhould come to want Bread, to feed upon Husks? How ſad is the change, how ſevere is my fate, which I know no more how to bear than how to avoid! But that's not the worſt yet. For,

3. He forethinks what is like to be the iſſue of this. "It is not only feeding upon Husks, but *I periſh for hunger*. I have a proſpect of nothing but death before me in the caſe I am in; I am loſt, undone, undone in the moſt dreadful circumſtances; for I periſh, and it is with hunger; death makes its ſure approaches, and that in the moſt ghaſtly ſhape: *Vivens videnſque pereo, I ſee and feel my ſelf dying.*

4. But yet in the laſt place, he looks about him to ſee if there be not ſome eſcape. "I am dying, (ſaith he) but not quite dead. Whilſt there is life there is hope; Who will not catch

"hold

" hold of any thing rather than periſh? And it " agrees not with my condition to ſtick at any " thing that can miniſter the leaſt probability of " ſafety. Am not I a Son, though I am here a " Slave? have I not a Father, and hath not he " pity? why then do I ſtand ſtill and die, and " not rather make the utmoſt experiment?

After this manner, we may feel the pulſe of the Prodigal Son to beat, and the thoughts of a Sinner, whom God hath awakned by affliction, move much after the ſame rate. For firſt, as ſoon as his Eyes are opened, he cannot chooſe but call to mind the bleſſedneſs of a ſtate of innocency, and reaſon with himſelf on this wiſe. " Whatever my caſe " is now, ſure I was made in the Image of God, " placed under the Eye of his Providence, as it " were of his Family and Table, Heaven and Earth " miniſtred to me, I was Lord of the Lower, and " Favourite of the upper World, as if the one was " made on purpoſe to exerciſe and divert me, and " the other to receive and reward me. I have " a nature capable of immortality, and had " eternal life deſigned for me as the inheritance of " a Son: and my task of obedience was as eaſie " and honourable as my hopes were glorious. For " I had no hard burthen laid upon me, nothing " required of me but what was proportionable to " my powers, and agreeable to the reaſon of my " mind; no reſtraint was laid upon my paſſions, " but ſuch as was evidently both neceſſary for the " world and good for my ſelf; that it could not " be drawn into an argument of harſhneſs and ſe- " verity in God, nor make apology for my tranſ- " greſſion. All my faculties were whole and in- " tire, I was neither tempted by neceſſity, nor op- " preſſed by any fate; I was therefore happy e-

" nough

" nough, and why am I not ſo ſtill? It is true
" that humane nature hath miſcarried ſince it
" came out of the hands of God, and I carry the
" Skar of that common Wound; yet is the dam-
" mage of the firſt *Adam* ſo repaired by the ſe-
" cond, that Mankind is left inexcuſable in all its
" actual tranſgreſſions; but eſpecially in a diſſo-
" lute and impenitent courſe of rebellion. Be-
" ſides, I ſee others whoſe circumſtances were in
" all points the ſame with mine, and their diffi-
" culties and temptations no leſs, to live holily
" and comfortably, having either eſcaped the too
" common pollutions of the World by an early
" compliance with the grace of God, or at leaſt,
" quickly recovered themſelves by repentance. I
" find therefore that I might have lived in the
" light of God's countenance, in ſerenity of mind,
" quiet of conſcience, ſenſe of my own integrity,
" and comfortable hopes of unſpeakable glory; in
" contemplation of which I might have defied
" death, and lived in Heaven upon Earth: but I
" have been meerly fooled by my own incogitancy,
" and undone by my own choice. For proceeds he,

2. " I have forfeited all this by ſinning againſt
" God, and been ſo ſottiſh as to prefer the ſatis-
" faction of my own humour before all the afore-
" ſaid felicities. I have been ingrateful towards
" my great Benefactor, broken the law of my
" Creation, confronted the wiſdom of the moſt
" High, been inſolent towards a mighty Majeſty,
" violated juſt and righteous commandments, ſin-
" ned againſt light, knowledge and conſcience, ad-
" ded preſumption to folly, wilfulneſs to weak-
" neſs, deſpiſed counſels, exhortations, promiſes, aſ-
" ſiſtances; my ſins are many in number, horrible
" in their aggravations, deadly in their continu-

" ance, and my perſeverance in them. By this " means I have not only wrought diſorder in the " world, but diſordered my own Soul, ſpoiled my " own powers, ſuffered paſſion to get head of my " reaſon, clouded my underſtanding, and ſo by " former ſins rendred it in a manner neceſſary " that I ſin ſtill. *For when I would do good, evil* " *is preſent with me; I find a law in my members re-* " *belling againſt the law of my mind, and carrying* " *me into captivity to the law of ſin. O wretched* " *man that I am, who ſhall deliver me from this bo-* " *dy of death?* I have driven away the good Spi- " rit of God, and put my ſelf under the power of " Satan, become his ſlave and drudge. I know no- " thing now of the comforts of innocence, of the " joy of a good Conſcience, mine is a continual " torture to me, I have loſt the light of God's " countenance, and the very thoughts of him are " dreadful to me; by all which together life is a " burthen, and yet the thoughts of death are into- " lerable. Such reflexions and conſiderations as theſe break the very heart of a ſinner, and reſolve him into ſighs and tears.

3. But this is not the worſt of the caſe, for in the third place he conſiders what is like to be the iſſue of this. " This miſerable life (ſaith the ſin- " ner) cannot laſt always, death will arreſt me " ſhortly, and preſent me before a juſt Tribunal, " the grave will e'er long cover me, but not be a- " ble to conceal me, for I muſt come to Judg- " ment. Methinks I hear already the ſound of " the laſt Trump, *Let the dead ariſe, let them come* " *to judgment.* I ſee the Angels as Apparitors ga- " thering all the World together, and preſenting " them before that dreadful Tribunal. How ſhall " I be able with my guilty Conſcience to appear

" upon

" upon that huge Theatre, before God, Angels
" and Men? Methinks I ſee the Devil ſtanding at
" my right hand to aggravate thoſe faults which
" he prompted me to the commiſſion of. I be-
" hold the Books opened, and all the debaucheries,
" extravagancies and follies of my whole life laid
" open, *Chriſt* the Judge of all the World, com-
" ing in flaming fire to take vengeance upon them
" that have not known him, nor obeyed his Go-
" ſpel. How ſhall I endure his preſence? how
" ſhall I eſcape his Eye? I cannot elude his judg-
" ment, nor evade his ſentence; come then ye
" Rocks and fall upon me, and ye Mountains co-
" ver me from the face of the Lamb, and from
" him that ſitteth upon the Throne. But the
" Rocks rend in ſunder, the Sea and the Earth diſ-
" cloſe their dead, the Earth diſſolves, the Hea-
" vens vaniſh as a Scroll, and I hear the dreadful
" Sentence, *Depart ye curſed into everlaſting fire,*
" *prepared for the Devil and his Angels.* Methinks
" I hear *Chriſt Jeſus* thus upbraiding me: You
" have liſtened to the Devil and not to me, I
" would have ſaved you, but you would not be
" ruled by me; you have choſen the way of death,
" now therefore you ſhall be filled with your own
" ways; I forewarned you what would be the iſ-
" ſue of your courſes, but you would have your
" full ſwing of pleaſure for the preſent, whatever
" came of it hereafter; you laughed at judgment,
" and it is come in earneſt; you have had your
" time of jollity and ſenſual tranſports, and now
" your portion is *weeping, and wailing, and gnaſh-*
" *ing of teeth.* O therefore (ſaith the ſinner) that
" I had never been born, curſed be the day that
" brought me forth, and the Sun that ſhone up-
" on me; would the womb had been my grave,

" and I had never ſeen the light. Thus my guilty " Conſcience anticipates its own puniſhment, and " I am tormented before my time.

4. " But is there no hope left? muſt I lie down " thus in ſorrow and deſpair? Theſe things I may " juſtly expect, but they are not yet incumbent up- " on me; I am yet alive, and they ſay there is " hopes in the land of the living; the door is not " yet ſhut againſt me, Hell hath not yet cloſed " her mouth upon me. I have heard God is a " merciful God, and thereupon I preſumed hither- " to, and abuſed his goodneſs; but ſure his mer- " cies are above the meaſure of a Man; if they be " infinite like himſelf, he hath more goodneſs than " I have ingratitude. Poſſibly there may be ſome " hope left in the bottom of this *Pandora*'s Box " of calamities; if there be none, it is in vain to " repent, fruitleſs to weep, endleſs to bewail, mad- " neſs to add to my own infelicities. If there be " a rigid fate upon me, I will *Curſe God and die.* " But ſure whilſt there is a God there muſt be " goodneſs, his Name ſpeaks his Nature; will " he *break a bruiſed reed?* will he contend with " duſt and aſhes? Can infinite perfection be im- " placable and inexorable? It is true he hath no " need of me, but for the ſame reaſon he cannot " delight in my miſery. He cannot repent and " change his mind, becauſe his wiſdom foreſaw " from the beginning all poſſible contingencies; " but if I repent and change my mind, the ſame " inchangeableneſs of his will oblige him as well " then to ſave me, as before to deſtroy me. How " far he will extend mercy, and what inſtances " he will make of it I cannot define; but who " knows but he may yet admit of my ſubmiſſi- " on? however, I cannot be worſe than I am,

" and

" and it is poſſible my condition may be better;
" here I periſh certainly, if I caſt my ſelf upon
" his goodneſs I can but periſh, therefore I will
" try, *I will ariſe and go to my Father*, &c. And thus his deliberation brings him to reſolution, which is the ſecond Stage of Repentance.

## CHAP. II.

## Of Reſolution.

### The CONTENTS.

§. I. *That Conſideration, and all thoſe other previous acts of the mind mentioned in the former Chapter frequently miſcarry, and are nothing till they are fixed by Reſolution.*

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§. III. *The properties of a true Penitent Reſolution.* 1. *That it be not raſh but deliberate.* 2. *That it be peremptory.* 3. *Preſent. And* 4. *Uniform and Univerſal.*

§. IV. *The inducements of a Penitent Reſolution.* 1. *Its availableneſs with God by the exorableneſs of his nature.* 2. *The poſſibility of performing it.* *And* 3. *The eaſineſs of it by the power of his grace.* 4. *The flat neceſſity of coming to it.*

§. I. WE have ſeen in the foregoing Chapter the motions of an awakened Conſcience, the workings of a troubled mind, and therein the firſt glimpſes of hope, and ſigns of recovery. But let not any Man think that when he is arrived at this condition, his work is done, his peace made with God, and he become a true Convert. For if he ſtay here he periſhes as certainly as if he had never made any reflexion, or conſidered at all. It is

one

one thing to be apprehenſive of ones danger, and a far greater to have eſcaped it. The diſcovery of a diſeaſe is neceſſary in order to the cure, but it is far from the cure it ſelf. It is an unhappy but not an unuſal ſight, to ſee Men upon whom either the pain of ſome preſent affliction, or the fearful proſpect of divine vengeance hereafter, may have ſo far prevailed, as to make them with great ſhame and abhorrence reflect upon their former diſorders, and caſt up their pleaſant morſels, who yet ſhall quickly return again to their own vomit, and reſume their uſual extravagancies. A Rock it ſelf may be obſerved to drop upon change of weather, which nevertheleſs relents not, but is as hard, and as much a Rock as ever. And ſome extraordinary accident may rouze the moſt careleſs ſinner, and put him upon an effort of purging off his impurities, who yet when the ſtorm is over, ſhall ſettle again upon his Lees. It is no very rare thing to obſerve Men diſſolve into tears, and weep as heartily over their old ſins, as ancient Friends do when there is a neceſſity of parting; and yet (like them) wiſh and hope to meet and enjoy each other again.

Therefore as we ſee the formerly diſſolute, but now relenting Son in the Text, contents not himſelf with paſſionate expreſſions, or ineffective wiſhes, but reſolves upon action, *I will ariſe* (ſaith he) *and go to my Father:* So the true penitent ſinner that is in earneſt to ſave his Soul, ſits not down under a dozing melancholy, pleaſes not himſelf with wiſhing and complaining, ſpends not his time in doubting and diſputing, but puts himſelf forward upon the buſineſs: "For (ſaith he) whilſt "I ſit ſtill, time paſſes away, life runs out apace, "and death and judgment are coming on, where-

" fore ſome ſpeedy courſe muſt be taken, and
" there is but one way that affords any hope,
" which is that of real reformation; in which
" caſe no deliberations ſhall hold me longer in
" ſuſpence, no ſloth ſhall benumb me, nothing
" ſhall tempt me to delay any longer. I am re-
" ſolved I will make the experiment of becoming
" a new man from an old ſinner, and upon theſe
" terms I will caſt my ſelf upon God's mercy, and
" if I periſh I periſh.

§. II. This is the ſecond Stage of Repentance, (*viz.*) Reſolution, which I am now farther to treat of. But it is evident by what we have ſaid already, that the Reſolution we are to ſpeak of, is not a meer logical concluſion by way of inference from premiſes, that ſuch or ſuch a thing is beſt and fit to be done, for every Man that uſes his reaſon cannot chooſe but ſpeculatively aſſent to this as his duty and his intereſt, the proceedings of Reaſon being as natural and neceſſary as thoſe of ſenſe. Inſomuch that it is not in a man's power to deny a plain conſequence, or disbelieve what there is evident reaſon for. There is therefore no moral vertue in ſuch a concluſion, and ſo a Man may periſh notwithſtanding: as it is too notorious that many do, who act contrary to ſuch concluſions of their reaſon. But the Reſolution we here intend, and which we make the ſecond ſtep of Repentance is practical, and the act of the will; namely, its decretory and definitive ſentence for the actual proſecution of ſuch a courſe, as by Conſideration and the former proceſs of reaſon is diſcovered to be fit and neceſſary. Or rather, it is the wills actual application of it ſelf to the buſineſs, in conformity to which, all the inferiour powers

powers are put into action alſo, as being ſubject to its authority, influenced upon by its power, and carried about with the ſwing of the *primum mobile*, this firſt and great Orb of the Soul.

For the more clear underſtanding of this power of the will, and of the nature of Reſolution, let us ſuppoſe Reaſon and Senſe as two parties pleading their reſpective cauſes and intereſts; in which caſe, if we ſhould ſuppoſe a kind of drawn Battle between them, and the matter left *in æquilibrio*; notwithſtanding, it is within the power of the will to give the cauſe which way it pleaſes; or ſuppoſe alſo, that Reaſon acquits it ſelf never ſo well, and baffles its adverſary, yet all will be but a ſpeculation, and no effects follow till the will interpoſes its ſovereignty, and decrees peremptorily what ſhall be done. And then whatever the merits of the cauſe be, the inferiour powers without diſpute apply themſelves to the execution. For (to uſe another alluſion) Reaſon is as the Card which directs the courſe, and ſhews what is fitteſt to be done: but the Will is as the Helm and Rudder that turns about the whole Fabrick. This is that which is called Ἀυτεξούσιον, *i. e.* not a lawleſneſs or authority to do what we will, nor yet an ability to effect whatever we pleaſe; but a capacity within our ſelves of determining our ſelves, and making our own choice.

Now that we have indeed ſuch a capacity is matter of daily experience; for we cannot but have obſerved, that oftentimes when Reaſon and Religion have recommended ſuch things to us, and convinc'd us of the importance of them, yet we have followed our Paſſions notwithſtanding, and done quite contrary to the cleareſt dictates of our mind, in the words of the Apoſtle, Rom. 7. 23. *We have found a law in our members rebelling againſt the law*

*of*

*of our mind, and leading us captive to the law of ſin.* And contrariwiſe, ſometimes we have checked and ſubdued the importunities of our paſſions, and caſt the ſcale on the ſide of Conſcience and Religion, and both theſe out of the freedom of our own Souls. It is true, that very ordinarily in the former of theſe caſes, the Devil may promote the buſineſs by his temptations; and in the latter it is certain (as we heretofore have given caution) that there is the concurrence of the Divine Grace, and influence of the Holy Spirit; but both in the one and the other Man acts freely nevertheleſs, ſuffering no violence nor compulſion. For though there can be no doubt, but that God (who made Man, and can diſſolve him when he pleaſes) by the exerciſe of his Omnipotence may controul the elections of Men, or over-rule them to whatſoever he will; yet it is not reaſonable to think he will, or doth ordinarily do ſo. Determine them to evil he cannot, upon the account either of his own purity, juſtice, or wiſdom; and for his over-bearing them to the doing of that which is good, beſides that we cannot underſtand how it leaves any room for reward in ſuch a caſe; it ſeems as much to reproach his wiſdom in the firſt creation of ſuch beings, as to diſplay his power in controuling their actions and elections, and would be as unſeemly a *Phænomenon*, as for him to croſs and pervert the common courſe of natural cauſes.

And for the Devil, though he by the order of his Creation be of an higher rank, and of greater power than we; yet he is by no means able to force our wills, or to reſcind the decrees of a free mind. God permits him to uſe his cunning, and to ſhew his malice, in contriving baits to allure and catch us, and ſeveral ways to give us diſturbance; but

if

if he ſhould allow him to force us, we may be ſure there ſhould never have been any one good Man in the World.

The objects that preſent themſelves to us from without, can but court our acceptance, not obtrude themſelves upon us: they knock at our door but cannot break in upon us; or they preſent us motives to alter our reſolutions, but it is in our power ſtill whether we will revoke them.

Example, and the common uſage of the world, the power of which is ſo much magnified by ſome Men, as if they thought it ſufficient to make an apology for all our follies; It is ſo inconſiderable in this caſe, that if we duely conſider its efficacy, we muſt pronounce of it, that it works only metaphorically not phyſically, and is at moſt but an Ideal cauſe, (if we will call it ſo) ſufficient to abuſe Men of ſoft and eaſie minds, but not the manly and generous. As for the lower and merely animal powers in us, they (as we noted before) may corrupt the imagination, and begin to form a ſeditious party within us; but it is ſtill in the power of the will (till it dethrones it ſelf) ſo to ſuppreſs them that they ſhall never be ſucceſsful in their rebellion.

But then in the laſt place, for Reaſon it ſelf, which ſome Men governing themſelves by an old maxime, *(voluntas ſemper ſequitur dictamen intellectûs)* ſuppoſe to preſcribe ſo authoritatively to the will, as that the privilege of freedom belongs rather to the former than the latter; if that were true, (*i. e.* if the will muſt proceed upon the dictates of reaſon) there would be no ſuch thing as liberty at all, becauſe it is not in our power what light our underſtanding ſhall have, and as I have noted before, we cannot believe what we will, nor underſtand

Ἀδυνατὸν γάρ ἐστι τῷ φαινομένῳ συγκαταθέσθαι, &c. *Arriani Epict. lib.* 3. *cap.* 7.

underſtand things otherwiſe than they are repreſented to us; therefore if the will have not a power of acting contrary to our underſtanding, as perfect a fatality is introduced, as is to be found amongſt natural agents. Beſides, we find by conſtant obſervation of our ſelves and the world, that in paſſion, in love, in the purſuit of riches, and honour, and moſt of our proſecutions, we ſometimes follow our reaſon, ſometimes go before it, and ſometimes quite croſs it. It is true indeed, we ordinarily have ſome (either reaſon or pretence of reaſon) or other, to countenance our elections, becauſe otherwiſe it could not be called choice where there is no end propounded, or deſign aimed at, (which I think is all that the aforeſaid abſolute maxime intends.) Nevertheleſs ſince it is manifeſt we oftentimes follow that which we know not to be the beſt reaſon, even then when we follow it, we may thereby be ſufficiently convinced of the arbitrary power of our own Wills.

This which we have been aſſerting is a truth of that importance, that the denial thereof (1.) cuts the very ſinews of all induſtry, (2.) deſtroys the differences of good and evil, (3.) takes away all principles of Conſcience, (4.) all arguments of Repentance, (as we have ſhewed before) and (5.) herewith makes that natural paſſion of ingenuous ſhame, which mankind is peculiarly endowed with, utterly ſenſeleſs and unaccountable. But the truth of this ſuppoſed, we eaſily underſtand both the nature and force of reſolution, which is the only thing we have aimed at.

To proceed therefore: The Son in the Text conſcious of this truth, and as well ſenſible of his own liberty, as certain of the neceſſity of taking ſome courſe or other to relieve himſelf, ſaith in the words

words before recited, *I will ariſe, I will go to my Father, I will ſay unto him*, &c. And the Reſolutions of every Penitent are to the ſame effect; *(viz.)* "I will not ſit with my hands folded up as "a Man infatuated and fitted for deſtruction: I "will ſpend no more time in doubting and diſpu-"ting, nor abandon my ſelf to deſperation; I'll "endeavour both to ceaſe to do evil, and to learn "to do well; I will take ſhame to my ſelf, ac-"knowledge my folly, *and accept the puniſhment "of my iniquity.* I will earneſtly deprecate the di-"vine diſpleaſure, and deplore his mercy and par-"don. In ſhort, whatſoever difficulty appears in "the buſineſs, or whatſoever temptations may aſ-"ſault me, I will deſiſt my former courſe, and "make it my care to undo all that was amiſs, and "make amends for my former follies by my fu-"ture zeal and diligence.

§. III. But that theſe things may be the more evident, let us now in the next place ſee the properties and eſſential requiſites of a true Penitent Reſolution. And they are theſe four.

1. *It is deliberate, and taken up upon mature conſideration.*

2. *It is peremptory.*

3. *It is a reſolution* de præſenti.

4. *Laſtly, It is univerſal.*

Firſt, a true Reſolution is ſerious and deliberate, not like thoſe raſh vows which Men make in a fit or an agony; and which laſt no longer than the heat, or the diſtreſs. Many Men there are that now and then take a pet at their old ſins, when they have found themſelves diſappointed of either the pleaſure or the ſecurity which they promi-

*Stomachum illi fecit luxuria: cito tamen cum illa redibit in gratiam. Sed dicit ſe offendi vitâ ſuâ; non negaverim, Quis enim non offenditur? Homines vitam ſuam & amant ſimul & oderunt*, &c. Senec. Epiſt. 112.

ſed

ſed themſelves in the enjoyment of them; or that for their ſake they are ſurprized with ſome calamity they did not expect; and whilſt that diſguſt laſts, they ſeem mightily reſolved for ever to break with them; but as ſoon as that mood is over, like old friends, they are quickly reconciled, and return to their former graciouſneſs. It is not to be doubted but that the Prodigal Son had many a lucid interval before this; and as often as he met with any ſharp croſs or vexation in his way, had relenting thoughts, and wiſhed himſelf again at his Father's houſe; but it was but a flaſh, an *extempore* motion, a paſſion, not a cool rational choice; there was no deliberation, and therefore no reſolution, and ſo nothing came of it. *That* (ſaith *Seneca*) *which amounts to a reſolution muſt be ſetled in the mind, founded in reaſon, rooted in the judgment, not looſe, occaſional, and upon emergency.* When a Man having conſidered all the pleaſures and advantages of ſin on the one hand, and all the difficulties and ſelf-denial of vertue on the other, hath meaſured the hopes and the fears, compared the preſent with the future, and repreſented the whole Series of things to his own mind; and then comes to a concluſion, this is Reſolution. Such a determination as this *Joſhua* puts the people of *Iſrael* upon; on the one hand he repreſents to them the great reaſons they had to adhere to, and ſerve the true God of *Iſrael*; and on the other, the difficulties of ſo doing; the ſincerity and accuracy which his Worſhip and Service required, and the danger of his ſeverity if they neglected it: and then he exhorts them to lay their hand upon their heart, to conſider all things with themſelves, to reſolve of nothing raſhly, but upon the fulleſt ſatisfaction: verſ. 15. *If it ſeem evil unto you to ſerve the Lord, chooſe*

*Inſigi debet perſuaſio ad totam vitam pertinens; hoc eſt quod decretum voco.* Sen. Ep. 95.

Joſ. 24. 15.

*chooſe you this day whom you will ſerve*, &c. and verſ. 16. the people anſwered and ſaid, *God forbid that we ſhould forſake the Lord to ſerve other Gods*, &c. and then laſtly, verſ. 26. *He writes all theſe paſſages in a Book*, makes an authentick record thereof, and withall ſets up a ſtone of memorial to make the greater impreſſion, and to give the more ſolemnity to the whole buſineſs.

And this ſame thing is that which our Saviour himſelf intends in thoſe two famous Parables, concerning the Man about to build a Tower, and the Prince going to War; which we have taken notice of before. Our Saviour would have Men that come to him, and pretend to embrace his Religion, to count the coſt of it, to know the worſt of things, to reckon upon all that may happen: and ſo alſo *Jeſus* the Son of *Syrach* adviſes, Ecclus. 2. 1, 2. *My Son, if thou come to ſerve the Lord, prepare thy Soul for temptation. q. d.* If thou deſigneſt to enter upon a courſe of vertue, thou muſt forethink the impediments as well as the encouragements, the conflict as well as the crown, and arm thy ſelf with reſolution accordingly. Luk. 14. 28, &c.

It is the artifice of the Devil to repreſent only the fair ſide of things to Men, to hide the hook with the bait. It's noted by the Evangeliſt, that he ſhewed our Saviour the *Kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them*, he ſet forth no Scene of the troubles, vexations, vanities and diſappointments of the world, but all was beauty and glory. For he deſigns to ſurprize and lies at catch for Men, and knows it is his intereſt they ſhould not conſider, nor curiouſly inquire into the juſt ſtate of things, but take a tranſient glance only, and do all in a hurry. Matt. 4. 8.

But it is not God's way to ſurprize Men, and make advantage of their inadvertency, for he his not pleaſed

pleaſed with the ſacrifice of Fools; it is a *reaſonable ſervice* he requires, *(viz.)* that Men conſider what they do, and chuſe him wiſely and ſeriouſly. Nor is it the condition of vertue to have an alluring out-ſide, to tempt Men's paſſions, or impoſe upon their imaginations; it hath a matronal beauty, no meretricious paint; it conſiſts in a real and ſubſtantial excellency, which only can work upon him that conſiders: ſo that no Man falls in love with it upon a glance, nor eſpouſes it ſuddenly, but upon calm debate of its real and inward perfections. And his love is founded in reaſon, matured by time, and confirmed by experience. Or if there be any that pretends to vertue upon other terms, it is no uncharitableneſs to propheſie, that whatever his preſent heats and tranſports may be, they will quickly cool and come to nothing. Such caſes being fitly reſembled by our Saviour to the
Matt. 13.— *ſtony ground:* which received the Seed with joy at firſt, and promiſed fair for a mighty Harveſt; but having not depth of Earth brought nothing to perfection: Pſal. 129. 7. *The Mower filled not his hand therewith, nor the Reaper his boſom.*

And indeed herein ſeems to lie the true and immediate reaſon of moſt or all of thoſe ſhameful apoſtaſies, by which the name of God and Religion are ſo much diſhonoured: *(viz.)* that Men fall off from hopeful beginnings, and *end in the fleſh, after they had begun in the Spirit*, as the Apoſtle's phraſe is, namely, there was not depth of Earth, no ſufficient ſerious conſideration of what they undertook. For it is certain, there are no inſuperable difficulties in Religion, no irreſiſtible temptations to the contrary; God is not worſe than his word, nor doth change his terms, nor can any Man ſee any reaſon to alter his mind if he

calcula-

calculated as he might have done at first; but they considered not, counted not the cost, and so are surprized and beaten off. And the holy Gospel gives us no less a Man than St. *Peter* himself, for instance hereof: He in a great pang of devotion to his Master goes out before the Camp of *Israel*, defies *Goliah* and all the uncircumcised Philistins, dares and challenges danger it self; and, *Lord*, (saith he) *If all men should forsake thee, yet will not I: If I must die for thee, I will not forsake thee.* But it was only an heat, and a bravery of the Apostle; he had not seriously considered the business, nor forecasted what might ensue; there was no mature deliberation, no preparations for a real encounter, and therefore it sped accordingly, and he came off shamefully: and in him we have a standing example of the frailty of the greatest passion, and of the necessity that counsel and deliberation ground our Resolutions. By which means also they will become,

2. Decretory and peremptory, which is the second property of vertuous resolution. There are some Men whom an affectionate discourse, a serious Sermon, or any notable accident, will put into a fit of devotion, which shall last only until something else come in the way, and then the former impressions give way to the latter. These we commonly call good natured Men, whose facility of temper puts them at the mercy of every contingency, and they are good and bad as occasion serves: *Clouds they are without water, carried about of every wind*, (as St. *Jude* expresses it, *vers.* 12.) or as St. *James*, *Double minded men, and unstable in all their ways*; Jam. 1. 8. that have no setled principle, nothing fixed and constant to govern themselves by. To these the Prophecy of *Jacob*

Οὐδεὶς τὸ ἐπαμφοτερίζων δύναται προκόψαι. *Arian. Epict. lib.* 3. *c.* 2.

concerning his Son *Ruben*, may fitly be applied, Gen. 49. 4. *Unſtable as water, therefore thou ſhalt not excell:* ſuch irreſolute tempers can never arrive at any excellency of vertue. The people of the *Jews* had no doubt a good mind to be in poſſeſſion of the Land of *Canaan*, notwithſtanding whenever they met with any difficulty, then *would to God we were again by the fleſh-pots of* Ægypt; and none of theſe light and mutable perſons ever came to the good Land. There were Anakims and Giants, and a thouſand difficulties ran in their heads which enfeebled them for the enterprize; only *Joſhua* and *Caleb*, and ſuch as were animated by their brave example, and ſaid, *Come let us go up, for we are able to conquer:* only ſuch, I ſay, came to the poſſeſſion of it: 1 Kings 18. 21. *How long halt ye between two opinions?* (ſaid the Prophet to the Men of *Iſrael*) *If Baal be God ſerve him, but if Jehovah be God then ſerve him. q. d.* Whether you ſerve the true God or the falſe, irreſolution ſpoils all devotion either way; for whilſt you doubt and diſpute your way, you do but halt towards your end and deſign. Accordingly *Moſes* indeavours to raiſe a generoſity of mind in the Men of *Iſrael*, by thoſe words, Deut. 26. 17. *Thou haſt vouched the Lord this day to be thy God: q. d.* It now becomes you to be religious in earneſt, to ſerve God with a perfect heart and a willing mind, for you have now put it paſt all diſpute, you have choſen and reſolved the Lord to be your God, and therefore be conſiſtent with your ſelves.

There is no vertue in a faint velleity, when Men ſhall ſpeak as *Agrippa* in the *Acts*, *Almoſt thou perſuadeſt me to be a Chriſtian.* It is no wiſdom to put in Cautions now, 'tis only the language of the ſluggard, to ſay *there is a Lion in the way.* *Poſt-*

*quam*

*quam consulueris maturè facto opus est.* All gallantry of mind is now (after deliberation) to take up an immoveable resolution; for Vertue is neither a wary diffidence nor a hot fit of zeal, but a constant vital heat, and a setled temper of mind. The young Man in the Gospel, St. *Mark* 10. 22. comes to our Saviour, *Good Master, what good thing shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?* He thought it a fine thing to be a Candidate of the other World: eternal life which our Saviour preached and promised, was a glorious and very desirable thing; and he could be well content to become a Disciple of *Christ*, and to do some very good thing that he might attain it. For indeed, eternal Life is that which no Man can chuse but desire; to have a mind to be saved is no sign of grace; for a Man must expresly hate himself should he do otherwise. Thus far therefore he was right; but after all this he went away sorrowful without his errand; he had not throughly resolved with himself to go through with it, he could not find in his heart (like the wise Merchant) to *sell and part with all he had to purchase this pearl of inestimable price.* But the true Penitent sets down an immoveable resolution to go through whatever it cost him. "I have faultered too long already (saith he) now "*stat sententia*, it is as the Law of the *Medes* and "*Persians* with me, nothing shall dispense with my "purpose, or assoil my resolutions. I will *now re-* "*turn.* And that brings me to the

3. Third property of a vertuous resolution: It is *de presenti*, a present Resolution; like that of the Psalmist, Psal. 119. verf. 59, 60. *I thought upon my ways, and turned my feet to thy precepts: I made hast, and delayed not to keep thy righteous judgments. q: d.* "My consideration led me to resolu-

" tion of amendment, and I found the nature and " conſequence of that was ſuch, as to admit of no " delay; I therefore ſet preſently about it. A reſolution of amendment which commences not preſently, but intends to do it hereafter, is no repentance nor any good ſign of grace; forasmuch as it is probable that there is no Man in the whole world, at leaſt under the light of the Goſpel, and who hath ever reflected upon himſelf, or thought of God and another life, but hath ſome time or other reſolved to become a new Man. And indeed, this is the moſt fatal cheat Men put upon themſelves, and I fear now there are multitudes entered into the Chambers of Darkneſs, and an irreverſible eſtate, that for a great part of their lives carried along with them both convictions of the neceſſity of reformation, and reſolutions one time or other to ſet about it. For as I ſaid before, it is but ſelf-love to deſire eternal life; and no Man that conſiders at all, can think but ſomething muſt be done for the attainment of it; or (ſo thinking) can ſo deſperately abandon himſelf as not to intend to do it. But he underſtands not ſufficiently either the evil or the danger of ſin, much leſs hath any true ſenſe of vertue, that can find in his heart to procraſtinate and adjourn the reſolution of caſting off the former and applying himſelf to the latter: For where the miſchief is intolerable on the one hand, and the good and happineſs the moſt unſpeakable and higheſt that can be, on the other; there can be neither wiſdom nor ſafety in any other courſe than that which *Solomon* directs, Eccleſ. 9. 10. *Whatever thy hand finds to do, do it with all thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wiſdom in the grave whither thou goeſt.* When once death hath cloſed

The Reader is deſired to peruſe three ſhort but ſad ſtories to this purpoſe in Dr. *J. Taylor*'s Great Exemplar. *Part.* 3. *Diſc.* 19. *Sect.* 5.

cloſed our Eyes, the time of probation is over, the day of grace certainly ſhuts in, and *the night cometh when no man can work*; And who that either underſtands the frail contexture of his body, or the many thouſand accidents it is ſubject to, can be warranty for his own life one moment beyond the preſent? or if that ſhould be continued, who ſhall ſecure us that a day of grace ſhall laſt as long as we live? Who ſhall preſcribe to the Almighty that he ſhall wait our leiſure, and accept us at laſt? All which things conſidered, he that only reſolves to amend hereafter, is certainly reſolved not to amend now; and therefore is in no ſtate of repentance, nor in the way of mercy.

Wherefore the true Penitent reſolves preſently to ariſe: "I have trifled too long already (ſaith "he) It is no dallying any longer in a buſineſs of "this nature. I have been couzened by my own "heart oft enough, I will truſt my ſelf for day no "longer. I do not find my heart either more "willing or more able to perform by all the time "I have given it: but quite contrary, my ability "is leſs, and my debt greater: my heart harder, "my affections more ingaged, and leſs willing to "come off. I do not find that the longer I ſerve "the Devil, he is ever the likelier to manumit "me; nay I feel the longer I ſerve him, the hea-"vier Chains he lays upon me. If he can per-"ſuade me that it is yet too ſoon to return to "God, he will by the ſame Logick perſuade me "hereafter that it is too late. And I find by ex-"perience that if my heart be bad to day, it is "likely to be worſe to morrow: I cannot think it "reaſonable to expect that God's Spirit will ſtrive "with me the more I reſiſt him; nor dare I truſt "*that grace ſhould abound the more my ſin abounds.*

" A day neglected now, for ought I know, may " be as much as my Soul is worth, and may coſt " me Eternity: now by God's grace I find it in " my heart to return, and I'll put it in executi- " on. I will no more venture upon uncertainties, " nor forgo what is in my power for what is not: " I will not promiſe to pay hereafter what I am " not willing now to perform. No more there- " fore of the ſluggard, *Yet a little ſleep, a little* " *ſlumber, a little folding of the hands to ſleep.* I " will now ariſe and return to my Father, and to " my duty, which is

4. The fourth and laſt property of vertuous reſolution: namely, it is a through and uniform reſolution which takes in the whole buſineſs and compaſs of Religion. The Hiſtorian obſerves of the *Romans* in the degenerate times of their Commonwealth, that now all their diſputes were not *an ſervirent ſed cui, not for liberty, but who ſhould be their Lord:* and they ſought not to aſſert or recover their Freedom, but meerly to have the choice of their yoke, and ſo who ever conquered they were certainly Slaves. In like manner ſome Men being under convictions of Conſcience of the evil and danger of the way they are in, reſolve upon a change, but it is not to change themſelves but their ſins, one for another. The Drunkard becomes covetous, the looſe and licentious perſon exchanges his levity for moroſity, and from a common ſcandal becomes a buſie-body, a judge, and very cenſorious. And ſo the Man is diſguiſed rather than amended; and hath a new Maſter, but is nevertheleſs a Slave. Others perhaps there are who will go farther, and part with a ſin without a *ſuccedaneum*, or entertaining any other it its room, becauſe it might happen that ſuch a ſin was grown

leſs

less agreeable to their constitution, too chargeable for their profit, too dangerous to their reputation, and peradventure also too uneasie for their Consciences; but there are some other sins they can by no means think of foregoing. Thus the Scripture observes of some Kings of *Israel* that were great reformers, and expressed a mighty zeal against the Idolatry of *Ahab* and other corruptions; who yet all their days stuck close to the *sin of Jeroboam the Son of Nebat:* that kind of Idolatry was bound up with their interest, and therefore must not be laid aside.

Indeed, if we consider the matter well, we shall find the power of an inlightned Conscience to be such, as to prevail with any Man to resolve either to forsake any one sin upon condition he might securely enjoy all the rest, or at least not to stick at any one duty of Religion, if thereby he might expiate his other commissions and omissions. And the *Jews* had a corrupt Doctrine amongst them very agreeable to this humour: namely, that if a Man observed some one remarkable precept of the Law, it was enough to excuse him upon the whole; and that notion of theirs seems to have given occasion to that question so often put to our Saviour; *Which is the great commandment of the Law?* For they disputed among themselves upon that supposition, which was the one surest point to trust to, whether to Sacrifice as some held, or to Circumcision as others, or to the observation of the Sabbath as a third, *&c.* I say their intent was to ask his opinion what branch of the Law God most insisted upon, that in compliance therewith they might compendiously secure their own interest without the trouble of universal obedience: but our Saviour being aware of the subtlety, directs

Matt. 22, 35. Mark 12, 28. Luke 18, 18.

them in all the places forementioned to that Paragraph of the Law which was comprehenſive of the whole: *(viz.) Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy ſoul*, &c.

The Devil is ſo wary and frugal a Trader that he will comply with the Market, and is content, as I noted before, to barter one ſin for another; or rather to compound for half than to loſe all: and is alſo ſo good a Philoſopher as to know *malum oritur ex quolibet defectu, & bonum conſtat ex integris cauſis*; *That the voluntary omiſſion of any one part of our duty nulls our obedience, and that one ſin will damn a man as well as many.* For he that retains a love to any one ſin cannot be ſaid to have a reſolution againſt ſin, or to hate ſin for it ſelf; and God is reſolved to have us intirely his, or not at all. For he that makes any exceptions or reſervations, that capitulates with God, deals not with him as with a God. He therefore that takes up a penitent reſolution is uniform and univerſal therein, fully decrees with himſelf to omit nothing that he knows to be his duty, nor to diſpenſe with himſelf in the practice of any thing (how grateful ſoever to him) that he knows to be a ſin. "I know (ſaith he) God by his ſovereignty hath a juſt title to my whole life, and to all my powers; he hath obliged me beyond all that ever I can correſpond with; he is jealous of his honour, and hates to be ſerved deceitfully and by halves; he will admit of no rival, no ſharer with him; he ſees all my wanderings, and will be ſure to revenge my hypocriſy. I know he is able and ready to reward ſincerity above deſert, above expectation, beyond all thought and imagination. I am ſenſible that hitherto I have not only loitered in his ſervice, but declined it; nay

" nay oppoſed, affronted, rebelled againſt him; I " have liſted my ſelf under his profeſſed Enemy, " and under that Banner I have ſpent a great part " of my time. Now may it pleaſe his infinite " goodneſs to accept me at laſt; I vow to be in- " tirely his, I'll diſpute no commands, I'll make " no exceptions, but I'll double my diligence, and " ſay with the exemplary Convert S. *Paul*, *what* " *wilt thou to have me to do, Lord?*

§. IV. Thus we have ſeen the nature and properties of that which we called the hinge of converſion; but let us now ſee what are the ſprings or plummets that ſet this great Engine on work; or what are the conſiderations by way of motive, that put Men upon a reſolution of repentance; and they are principally theſe four.

1. *A perſuaſion that it will not be unſucceſsful and unacceptable to God if we truly repent at laſt, though we have been great ſinners before.*

2. *An apprehenſion that it is not impoſſible to become perfectly new men, notwithſtanding our preingagements in the ways of ſin.*

3. *That it is not only poſſible but eaſie ſo to do if we ſet about it in earneſt.*

4. *A clear perception, that whether it be eaſie or difficult, there is a plain neceſſity of it, and it muſt be done.*

1. The firſt motive to a reſolution of repentance is a perſuaſion of mind that God is not inexorable, but that repentance may find acceptance with him. It is a memorable ſtory concerning the *Tuſculani*, a little people in *Italy*, who had ſo highly provoked the *Romans* that *Camillus* was leading his

his Army towards them to take revenge: but they growing quickly apprehenſive of their danger, took an effectual courſe to appeaſe a generous Enemy; for they made no ſhew of reſiſtance, but ſet open their Gates, and were found every Man hard at his ordinary affairs, ſubmitting all to the will of thoſe they knew themſelves unable to contend with. Whereupon the brave *Camillus* ſpeaks to them to this purpoſe. *You* (ſaith he) *amongſt all people have only found out the true way of abating the Roman fury, and your ſubmiſſion hath been your beſt defence; upon theſe terms we can no more find in our hearts to injure you, than upon other terms you could have found power to oppoſe us.* To whom the chief Magiſtrate on the other ſide thus replies. * *We have* (ſaith he) *ſo in good earneſt repented us of our former folly, that in confidence of that ſatisfaction to a generous enemy, we are not afraid to acknowledge our fault.*

*Soli vos Tuſculani veras vires, vera arma quibus ab ira Romanorum vos tutaremini inveniſtis.*

* *Crimina noſtra vel fateri tutum cenſemus, cùm tam ſerio pœnituit.* Livy *Hiſt. lib. 6.*

Not much unlike to this is the ſenſe of the relenting Son in the Text: " For (thinks he) what " I have done amiſs I can neither anſwer to my " ſelf, nor to my Father; I can neither deny the " fact, nor defend it; therefore I muſt try what " repentance will do, and appeal from his juſtice " to his mercy. It is true I forſook my Father, " but it was a Father I forſook, and that name " ſpeaks benignity; and what may not a Son hope " for from a Father? There is Rhetorick in con- " feſſion, and contrite ſubmiſſion hath mighty pre- " valence upon all ingenuous natures. *Quem pœ- " nitet peccaſſe pœnè eſt innocens. Repentance uſes " to have the ſucceſs even of innocency it ſelf,* and " I that have failed of the one will try the other. " My acknowledgment will prevent his accuſati- " on. If I condemn my ſelf, I ſave my Father a " labour;

" labour; and when I abhor my ſelf, I move his " pity: eſpecially if I become another Man, he " will ſee the ſame reaſon to receive me then, as " he hath to reject me now.

And ſo the penitent towards God. " I have " offended the Divine Majeſty, but he is a God, " and that name ſpeaks goodneſs; if he be not as " good as can be, he is not God; and if he be, " nothing but what is good can proceed from him; " and nothing that is good, but may be expected " from him; therefore there is hope of pardon.

The wiſdom of all the World hath agreed to make it the conſtant ſtile of God, *Optimus Maximus, the greateſt Goodneſs*, or the *beſt Greatneſs*: goodneſs and mercy are as eſſential to him as power and juſtice; nay the very latter infer the former. For what is there can tempt an infinitely perfect being to be cruel and inexorable? He that hath all fulneſs in himſelf, can certainly envy nothing; can hate nothing that he hath made, but muſt needs pity thoſe that are below him, and delight to communicate himſelf to ſuch as need him. Envy and Cruelty are the iſſues of meer weakneſs, fear, want, and impotency. The poor are apt to envy the rich, becauſe theſe enjoy what they want; and we commonly obſerve, that the weakeſt and moſt timorous Creatures are moſt revengeful and implacable: The Coward is deadly and ſanguinary, becauſe he is not ſecure of his own ſtrength, and therefore dares not ſlip his opportunity, but ſtrikes home and mortally leſt the danger ſhould recoil upon himſelf. But what rich and great Man envies the Beggar? or what valiant Man was ever remorſleſs and ſanguinary? The former hath all the arguments to pity, becauſe he cannot want, and the latter all the inducements to pardon becauſe he cannot fear.

*Magnitudo, cum manſuetudine, omnis enim ex infirmitate feritas eſt.* Senec. *de vita beata c.* 3.

God

God is above all danger, can be hurt by nothing, needs nothing, hath nothing to receive, but much to bestow; he cannot therefore be prompted to take advantage against his Creatures, or delight in their misery, since the only ends he hath to serve upon them, is the enjoying his own fulness by reflexion, the diffusing and communicating himself to them, and thereby making them happy.

When God was highly provoked by the sin of *David* in numbering the people, in which fact there was a complication of many evils, there was disobedience to an express Law, there was distrust of the divine providence, and a vain confidence in the arm of flesh; It pleased the Divine Majesty to notifie his displeasure by the Prophet *Nathan*; and
2 Sam. 24. withal, gives *David* his choice either of Pestilence, Famine, or Sword: the King refers it back again to God, whether he would please to punish by the Famine, or by the Pestilence; for (saith he) *Let us fall into the hands of God, for his mercies are great; but let us not fall into the hands of men.* He had rather trust the mercies of an incensed God, than lie at the mercy of mortal Men. He knew they were transported with rage and fury, but God was pitiful; they often forgot themselves, but God remembred sinners were but Men, and dust and ashes. They would plague one another maliciously, but God chastised in wisdom and measure.
S. Jam. 2. 13. And that with him according to the phrase of S. *James*, mercy κατακαυχᾶται rejoyceth against, gorieth and triumpheth over justice.

Ὀυ γὰρ θυμῷ ὐδὲ ἀμυντικῶς· ὐδὲ παρ' ἀξίαν, ὐδὲ ἐπὶ βλάβῃ ποιεῖ τι ὁ θεὸς ἀλλὰ ἰατρικῶς καὶ κηδεμονικῶς καὶ πατρικῶς, καὶ ἐπὶ μεγίστῃ ὠφελείᾳ, καὶ ἀρκεῖ φάναι, κατὰ τὴν θείαν ἀγαθότητα, &c.

The Discourse of a brave Heathen is excellent to this purpose. *We think it just* (saith he) *to give*

*both*

*both thanks and reward to him that cures our bodily infirmities, though he do it not without ſome pain and trouble to us; and why ſhould we not rather love God's methods as the Phyſician of Souls? there is no paſſion, nor much leſs revenge, in his proceedings with us; he neither cuts and lances us cruelly, nor uſes any other ſharpneſs than the caſe neceſſarily requires; he doth nothing with intention to hurt or grieve us, but proceeds with art and care, deſigning our greateſt good: and in a word, is in all his actions agreeable to the goodneſs and benignity of his own nature.* The ſumm of all which, and of what we intend farther to ſay, is that of the Apoſtle, *God is good, and the goodneſs of God leadeth to repentance*, Rom. 2. 5. For the conſideration of that is the ſpring of hope, and of all motion by way of return.

There are indeed ſome Men who have entertained very crude notions of the Divine Majeſty, do ſometimes aſſert on the one hand that vindictive juſtice is eſſential and natural to God, ſo that he is bound up to require ſtrict ſatisfaction, and without it cannot properly pardon any tranſgreſſion. And others on the other hand, talk at the ſame wild rate of his mercy and goodneſs, as if all the inſtances he makes thereof were alſo natural and neceſſary, and that he could not inſiſt upon his own right, but muſt make all the expreſſions of kindneſs that are poſſible towards his Creatures. But both theſe notions are equally falſe and miſchievous: the former of them repreſenting God a rigid Majeſty, and tending to make Men deſpair; the other ſets him forth as an eaſie and ſoft Deity, and tempting Men to preſume upon him: the one making him an object or horrour, and the other of contempt; for who can love him that cannot pity, and who can reverence him who hath it not in

his

his power to do otherwise? The truth is therefore that all particular instances both of the one kind and of the other are subject to his wisdom; that he can exercise either mercy or severity as he sees occasion; for after this manner the Scripture speaks of him, that sometime *he hath mercy because he will have mercy; and that when he will he hardneth sinners for destruction.*

And to think otherwise of God, especially in the case of mercy and pardon, as if he could not dispence it as he pleases, is to bring in a rigid fatality with the Stoicks instead of a God; and is so far from aggrandizing the Divine Majesty, that it is the greatest diminution of his power and glory, and renders him less than a Man: for we can *recedere à nostro jure, remit of our own rights*, and give mercy a triumph over strict justice. And although the sinner when he offends against God forfeits himself into the divine hand, and gives God just cause to punish him if he will, yet certainly he cannot by any act of his put a Law upon God, or oblige him to punish, if he think fit to shew mercy.

Κατανόει τὰ σπλάγχνα (τοῦ θεοῦ) καὶ οὐκ ἀποκόψης τὴν ἐλπίδα. *Vid. huc spectantia apud S.* Basil. *Hom.* 28. *de pœnitent.*

And then for the interest of God's Rectorship and Government of the World, it is not a necessity of punishment that conserves that, but the power of freedom of punishing or remitting accordingly as it shall seem good to his own wisdom. Whereby Men are both provoked to amendment by the hopes of pardon, and restrained from disobedience by the fear of punishment. For the liberty of dispensing either of these at pleasure, is that which produces a reverence towards the Divine Majesty; that is, a complication of love and fear, wherein the very notion of Religion consists.

It

It is not an impertinent paſſage to this purpoſe which we have in the Hiſtorian, when the young Gentleman in the new *Roman* Commonwealth had a deſign to reſtore the Kingly Government in the family of the *Tarquins*, they had Speeches made amongſt them to this effect. *To be bound up by the rigour of Laws which had no compaſſion, nor made allowance for contingency, was very harſh and unſafe, conſidering humane infirmity: But under Kingly Government there was power of diſpenſation, poſſibility of indulgence, liberty of interpretation, room for mercy and pardon: a man that fell, did not neceſſarily there miſcarry. For there was place for interceſſion, repentance might relieve him; and the prerogative of the Prince was the ſecurity of the Subject.* *Apud Regem eſſe gratiæ locum, eſſe beneficio, & iraſci, & ignoſcere poſſe. Leges verò rem ſurdam & inexorabilem eſſe, nihil laxamenti nec venis habere, periculoſum eſſe in tot humanis erroribus, ſolâ innocentiâ vivere.* Liv. *Hiſt. lib.* 2.

Now that repentance is available with God we have all the aſſurance that can be deſired; for beſides what we have ſaid already from the conſideration of the perfections of the Divine nature, and his intereſt of the Government, repentance is the great and principal Doctrine of the Goſpel, which the Son of God himſelf came to proclaim by his Preaching, to confirm by his Miracles, to make way for, and to procure acceptance to by his Death and Sacrifice, and to render throughly effectual and ſucceſsful by his Interceſſion at God's right hand in Heaven. Wherefore as *Manoah*'s Wife reaſoned when her Husband had dreadful apprehenſions of the Majeſty of God, who had appeared to them: and concluded they ſhould die, *Becauſe they had ſeen God*; *No* (ſaith ſhe) *if God intended* Judg. 13. 23.

*tended to deſtroy us he would not have appeared to us, or much leſs have accepted a Sacrifice at our hands:* So aſſuredly if God had not great compaſſion to mankind, and did not deſign to accept them upon repentance, he would never have given his own Son to be a Sacrifice for ſin. Can any Man ſuſpect that God is indifferent whether Men be ſaved or no, when he hath ſent his Son to ſave them? Can any Man imagine him implacable towards thoſe whoſe nature he ſent his Son to aſſume, and thereby to make an union betwixt the divine and humane Natures? Will any Man think him inexorable to ſinners who pitied them, healed them, converſed with them, and died for them? Let Devils deſpair who have not only no promiſe, and no Saviour, but nothing pitiable in their caſe; having had (1.) no tempter to abuſe them, (2.) no fleſh or body to clog them, (3.) no infirmity to extenuate their preſumption; they are without hope, and therefore incapable of repentance, and ſo go on eternally to hate and blaſpheme the God that will not pardon them. But there is no cauſe Man ſhould do ſo, who as he hath all the arguments of pity in his caſe, ſo hath all the aſſurances of pardon from God upon his repentance.

To ſay no more, the very conſtant experience of all Ages, and the common ſenſe of all Mankind, leaves us without all doubt that this method of repentance pacifies the Almighty; inſomuch that when he hath moſt expreſt his angry reſentments, and ſeems to have been moſt peremptory and decretal in his threatnings, yet all but mad and deſperate perſons have encouraged themſelves to hope for impunity upon repentance, even then when there hath not been the leaſt intimation of any ſuch condition in his denunciations: for thus when the Prophet

*Jonas*

*Jonas* had from the mouth of God proclaimed expreſly, *Yet forty days and forty nights and Nineveh ſhall be deſtroyed*; Notwithſtanding the abſoluteneſs of the ſentence, and the nearneſs of the execution, the *Ninevites* were not out of hope, but that if repentance were interpoſed, their ruine might yet be prevented; and it ſucceeded accordingly with them; for as they believing God's Word by the Prophet, expected nothing but ſudden deſtruction if they had not repented, ſo they truſting in the goodneſs and exorableneſs of the Divine Majeſty upon repentance, applied themſelves ſeriouſly thereto, and were preſerved.

Wherefore ſaith the relenting ſinner, " Foraſmuch as although I know not the limits of the " Divine Mercy, yet this I know that nothing can " ſet limits thereto but his own wiſdom; and he " is never ſo ſtraitned but that if the caſe be piti- " able, and he ſee reaſon of mercy, he can ſhew " it, conſiſtently with his juſtice; here I will caſt " Anchor, I will indeavour to render my ſelf an " object of mercy, and truſt upon his goodneſs; " I never yet heard that any Man miſcarried in " this bottom, or that a Penitent was caſt away. " I have often heard that God would have ſaved " Men, but they would not; but I never heard " of any that reſorted penitently to his mercy and " were rejected, nor do I think that Hell it ſelf " can furniſh one inſtance of the Man that can up- " braid God's goodneſs, and ſay, *I would but God* " *would not*. Thus the conſideration of the Divine Nature is everlaſtingly pregnant of incouragements to repentance, and is the ſpring of all motion to Godward; were it not for which, never any had been reclaimed from a courſe of ſin, or begun a reformation. But ſo much of that.

2. In the Second place, another incouragement to this penitent reſolution (we are ſpeaking of) is an apprehenſion that it is not impoſſible to become perfectly new Men, notwithſtanding our preingagements in the ways of ſin. Opinion of abſolute impoſſibility (as we have noted before) is equal to real impotency, checks all motion, nips all indeavour in the very bud, ſtifles and lays aſleep all the powers of the mind. But hope and apprehenſion of feaſibleneſs ſpirits all induſtry, actuates all faculties, raiſes the ſpirits, and is the ſpring of all the great actions in the World. Some daring Men have effected things beyond their own expectations, but no brave exploit was ever performed by ſuch as deſpaired of accompliſhing it; nor was ever any force defeated that did *prælibare victoriam*, and reſolve to conquer. When once a conceit had poſſeſſed the *Midianites* that they ſhould be conquered by *Gideon*'s Army, (though grounded only upon an odd dream of a brown Loaf tumbling down upon their Tents,) their hearts preſently melted in them, their ſpirits were emaſculated, and a mighty Hoſt became an eaſie prey to the inconſiderable numbers which *Gideon* led againſt them. And the Lord of Hoſts would never ſuffer *Iſrael* to be led on to the Conqueſt of the Land of *Canaan* ſo long as the rumour of Giants and Anakims and walled Cities ran in the minds of the people; nor until they were brought to a confidence that they were able to conquer that good Land. In like manner, if the ſinner think either his ſins too great to be forgiven, or that it is too late to mend; *i. e.* either deſpair of God's grace or of his mercy, he is utterly loſt indeed; that therefore which puts him forward upon reſo-

Judg. 7.

lution

lution is an apprehenſion that *God's grace is ſufficient for him.*

The returning Prodigal ſaith, "It is true, I "find I have gone a great way from my Father's "Houſe, and wearied my ſelf with my own wan- "drings, yet ſure it is not impoſſible but I may "reach home again. And I, ſaith the ſinner, have "gone a great way towards my own undoing, ha- "ving indulged my paſſions, and dethroned my "reaſon, inſlaved my will, weakened all my powers "and hardened my own Conſcience by a long "courſe and cuſtom of ſin; yet (in the words of "holy *Job*) *There is hope of a tree if it be cut "down that it will ſprout again, and that the ten- "der branch thereof will not ceaſe; though the root "thereof wax old in the earth, and the ſtock thereof "die in the ground, yet through the ſcent of water "it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plant,* "Job 14. 7, 8, 9. Though I have weakened my "powers, yet I am a Man ſtill; though I have "deſtroyed my ſelf, yet there is hope in the God "of *Iſrael*, and his hand in not ſhortned that he "cannot ſave.

*Tully* is reported to have affirmed repentance to be impoſſible; namely, for a Man to retrive himſelf, and take up a new courſe contrary to that to which he hath been long habituated: and no doubt it is very difficult ſo to do, as may ſufficiently appear, both by what we have ſaid already, and alſo by that of the Prophet, Jer. 13. 23. *Can the Æthiopian change his skin, or the Leopard his ſpots? then may ye alſo do good that are accuſtomed to do evil.* Where the Holy Ghoſt intimates inveterate cuſtom to be equal to nature it ſelf, and accordingly we find by too ſad experience, that there are very few that do *exuere hominem*, ſhake off the

Lact. lib. 6. de vero Cultu, *cites ſuch a paſſage out of* Tully's *Third Book of Academies, which is loſt.*

yoke of custom; *Facilis descensus Averni, Sed revocare gradus*, &c. And upon this account it is, that the conversion of old sinners is called a New Birth, and a New Creation, in the language of Holy Scripture. Notwithstanding, as our Saviour said of rich Men, *That it was harder for a Camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for such a man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*; yet to prevent mistakes, adds, *With men it is impossible, but with God all things are possible*: So it is in this case, He can cause *dry bones to live*; and of *Stones raise up Children to Abraham*. The Holy Spirit can awaken those powers that were in a dead sleep; Conscience is not so callous but it may be rendred soft and sensible again; the will and other faculties of Men, though they are perverted, yet are not extinct; and being stirred up by the grace of God may exert themselves in a new strain, oppose their old customs, and introduce new habits.

Ἀντίθες τῷ ἔθει τὸ ἐναντίον ἔθος πρὸς τοὺς σοφιστικοὺς λόγους, τὰ λογικά· καὶ τὴν ἐν τούτοις γυμνασίαν ἀκριβήν· πρὸς τὰς τῶν πραγμάτων πιθανότητας τὰς προλήψεις ἐναργεῖς καὶ προχείρους ἔχειν δεῖ. *Arriani Epict. lib.* 1. *c.* 27.

As custom bore down and overgrew nature formerly, so new customs may supplant the old ones, and make a new nature. It is a well-known story, that when *Zopyrus* (a great pretender to the skill of reading Men's temper and inclination in their countenances) had pronounced of *Socrates* that he was a lewd and intemperate Man; the Company, who knew well the remarkable vertue of *Socrates*, laughed the cunning Man out of countenance, till *Socrates* relieved him, saying, that indeed his inclination was naturally such as *Zopyrus* had pronounced, but that Philosophy and the culture and care of himself had altered him to what he was.

But

But the Holy Scriptures as they contain both more excellent inſtitutions of vertue and holineſs than all Philoſophy, and more effectual methods of reclaiming and recovering men from vice and debauchery; ſo in the Hiſtory thereof, they afford us the moſt frequent and moſt remarkable inſtances of ſuch converſions. In the Old Teſtament we have *Manaſſes* who was an Idolater, a Witch, *and did evil in the ſight of the Lord above all the abomination of the Amorites*, (who ſeem to have been the moſt profligate people in the world) and yet became at laſt a true penitent, a holy and a vertuous perſon. In the New Teſtament, to omit St. *Paul*, who ſaith of himſelf, that *from a blaſphemer, a perſecutor, and the chief of ſinners, he became an exemplary Chriſtian, and a zealous Apoſtle and Preacher of the Doctrine which before he deſtroyed*; we have great numbers of the moſt obſtinate and wicked *Jews* converted, and no leſs of *Romans*, *Corinthians*, *Epheſians*, and of all other Cities and Countries who had grown old and hardned in a courſe of ſin, but became new and holy Men. Particularly the Apoſtle aſſures us of the *Corinthians*, *That they had been Fornicators, Idolaters, Adulterers, Effeminate, Thieves, Covetous, Drunkards, and yet were waſhed, were ſanctified, were juſtified in the name of the Lord Jeſus, and by the Spirit of our God*, 1 Cor. 6. 9, 10, 11.

2 Kings 21.

*Non dabit arbor mala fructus bonos, ſi non inſeratur; & bona malos dabit, ſi non colatur. Et lapides filii Abrahæ fient ſi in fidem Abrahæ formentur, & geminina viperarum fructum pœnitentiæ facient, ſi venena malignitatis expuerint, hæc erit vis divinæ gratiæ, potentior utique natura, habens in nobis ſubjacentem ſibi liberi arbitrii poteſtatem, quæ cum ſit & ipſa naturalis & mutabilis, quoquo vertitur, natura convertitur.* Tertul. de Anima c. 21.

" It is not therefore impoſſible (ſaith the ſinner) " but I may alſo recover my ſelf out of the ſnares

" of the Devil; I found it in my power to chuſe
" evil, why may I not hope to be able to chuſe
" good? nothing determined or neceſſitated me
" heretofore to ſin, why may I not then caſt off
" the yoke of cuſtom, and by the grace of God
" apply my ſelf to my duty? This is a ſecond conſideration which inflames the Penitent to a reſolution of amendment; which when he hath in earneſt entred upon, he finds,

3. As his third inducement, not only to be poſſible, but alſo eaſie; at leaſt, far beyond what he heretofore imagined. It was perhaps not an extenuating but a juſt reflexion which the Hiſtorian makes upon all the famous exploits of *Alexander* the Great, in *Aſia* and in the *Indies*, which had ſwelled his name to ſuch a bulk, *Primus auſus eſt vana contemnere*, that it was not ſo much his more than humane courage or conduct which gave him thoſe ſucceſſes, but that he had the luck or the ſagacity, to ſee through and deſpiſe the pageantry and empty ſhew of force and formidableneſs which thoſe ſoft and luxurious Nations were only furniſhed with. So it is in this caſe, he that can but once deſpiſe thoſe *Ludibria oculorum*, thoſe ſcarecrows and phantaſtical Ideas, which Mens own fear and cowardiſe repreſent to them; he will preſently find the buſineſs of Religion eaſie and expedite, and that it is but reſolving generouſly, and the thing is done.

The way of vertue, though through the folly of Men it be an unfrequented path, yet is it no ſad and uncomfortable way; no Man abridges himſelf the delight of life by becoming vertuous, no juſt contentment is denied him; no power, or ſo much as paſſion he hath, that is altogether denied its proper ſatisfaction: There is no inhumane auſte-

rity

rity required of us, no contradiction to our reaſon, or violence to our nature impoſed upon us. God is no hard *Pharoah* that ſeeks to break us with *bitter bondage*, *requiring the tale of bricks without ſtraw.* He doth not bid us continue in the fire and not burn, or require us to converſe with the occaſions of ſin, and eſcape the pollution; but only to moderate our deſires, to mind our ſelves, to ſet our intentions right, and in a word, to reſolve to do what we can, both to avoid the occaſion, and to eſcape the infection.

And as for that Bug-bear Cuſtom, why may we not break the fetters of our own making, and diſſolve an habit of our own beginning? Sin it ſelf was weak and timorous, and baſhful at firſt; but it got ſtrength by time, and by degrees, and in the ſame manner is to be ſupplanted; oppoſe beginnings of good to beginnings of evil, and an habit will be obtained, and we ſhall confront one cuſtom with another, *he that goeth forth weeping, bearing precious ſeed, ſhall doubtleſs come again rejoycing, and bringing his ſheaves with him.*

The way of vertue is therefore eaſie becauſe it is recommended by our own reaſon, though ſenſe oppoſe it for the preſent, let us be true to the former, and the latter muſt and will give way. A Law enacted by our own conſent uſes to find a ready and chearful compliance, that which is voted within us, and carried by the free ſuffrage of our minds, ſurely can never be accounted harſh and difficult: and ſuch are all the Laws of vertue; the rules thereof are convenient for the community, ſuitable to our own natures, and as fit for us to conſent to, as for God to enact.

All the oppoſition which the Devil or the fleſh can make to the determination of our minds will

quickly ceaſe if we ſtand firm to our ſelves; reaſon is as able to reſtrain ſenſe, as that is to bewitch and faſcinate our minds; or at leaſt if we ſtop our Ears we ſhall avoid all its charms, *charm it never ſo cunningly.* Beſides, all the importunities of the fleſh will from ſuch time as they begin to be denied, grow ſenſibly weaker and weaker. And for the Devil there is nothing ſo much incourages his attempts as our irreſolution and feeble oppoſition; he is both a more proud, and a more cunning enemy than to endure too many repulſes without hopes of ſucceſs. He knows well enough he cannot force us, and if he cannot corrupt us, will not long labour in vain. This the Apoſtle St. *James* aſſures us of, *Reſiſt the Devil and he will flee from you,* Saint *James* 4. 7.

Above all, the Holy Spirit of God will not fail to ſet in with us, and make all eaſie to us, if we ceaſe to reſiſt and quench his motions. How that worketh in and upon us is not eaſie to diſcover:
S. Joh. 3. 8. for *As the wind bloweth where it liſteth, and we hear the ſound thereof, but know not whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth; ſo is every one that is born of the Spirit:* notwithſtanding we are aſſu-
S. Luke 11. 13. red that *God will give his Holy Spirit to them that ask it*; and that that Spirit hath a mighty influence upon us without doing any violence to us, and that its aids are incomparably greater than the De-
1 Joh. 4. 4. vil's oppoſition; *For greater is he that is in us, than he that is in the world:* and this is our great in-
Phil. 2. 13. couragement to *work out our own ſalvation with fear and trembling, becauſe God worketh in us to will and to do of his good pleaſure.*

The miſchief of all is therefore our want of reſolution, that we do but dally and trifle in this great buſineſs: and hence all the difficulty ariſes.

Quo

*Quo minùs timoris eo minùs ferme periculi.* Cowards run the greatest dangers in War, and irresolute Men find the most opposition, and the greatest difficulty in a course of vertue. Did we but collect our selves, we should quickly find the face of things altered, and all discouragements vanish.

" All this methinks is plain (saith the Penitent) " and I am resolved to make experiment of it, " for I am not out of hopes, considering the pre- " mises, and especially the promise of my Savi- " our, that I shall *find his yoke easie, and his bur-* " *then light*; and that I may do *his commandments* " *and not find them grievous.*

But the last and greatest inducement of resolution is yet behind, and that is an apprehension of absolute necessity; that whether it be easie or difficult, it must be done. It is a well-known saying of *Pythagoras*, Δύναμις γὰρ ἀνάγκης ἐγγύθι ναίει, *That power dwells next door to necessity*: For as *Hierocles* expounds it, Ἕκαστος ὧν οἴεται δυνάσθαι, πλέον δυνάμενος ὑπὸ τῆς ἀνάγκης ἐλέγχεται, *When necessity lies upon a Man, it makes him confess an ability he would not acknowledge before; it puts his powers as it were upon the rack, and extorts those secrets of nature which sloth would have concealed.* Who knoweth not that we owe to necessity most of the rarest discoveries and greatest improvements in all Arts and Sciences? and all Histories observe what great atchievements this hath been Author of. Pursuant whereof those who have conduct of great affairs, make it usually their care to put those which they make use of as instruments in their enterprizes, under as quick apprehensions of necessity as they can possibly, by that means to sharpen their resolution. And on the contrary, endeavour to keep their Enemies and those they conflict with, from

Pythag. *Aurea Carmina.*

Hierocl. *in Aurea Carmina.*

from neceſſity, as being loth to experiment the efficacy of it againſt themſelves.

So it is in the preſent caſe, ſo long as an old inveterate ſinner can find any refuge, he ſcarcely ever applies himſelf to repentance; but when having conſidered, he finds himſelf reduced to extremity, that this muſt relieve him or nothing; then and not till then he earneſtly applies himſelf to it, as *ad ſacram Anchoram, to his laſt and only remedy.* " For (ſaith the ſinner) I cannot ſtand at the Bar " of God's juſtice, my appeal therefore muſt be " to his mercy, and there can be no room for " that but upon terms of ſubmiſſion and repen- " tance; either God muſt change, or I muſt re- " ſolve either to change or periſh. I have gone " aſtray to the very brink of Hell, and it is un- " reaſonable to expect God ſhould fetch me back " by irreſiſtible power, ſince he hath no need of " me, and therefore I muſt ſeek him in the way in " which he will be found. It is in vain to truſt to " his abſolute and ſecret decrees, againſt the tenour " of his known laws; or to hope that notwith- " ſtanding all my former miſcarriages, and my " preſent impenitency added to them, my name " may be written in the Book of Life. Since " *God is a righteous Judge, and will without re-* " *ſpect of perſons render to every Man according to* " *his doings.* What ſhall I then do? If I perſe- " vere in my old courſe, adding ſin to ſin, I make " my caſe daily worſe, *treaſuring up wrath againſt* " *the day of wrath*; and if I ſit ſtill, my neglect " will as certainly ruine me as my ſin. Whilſt I " delay the remedy, I cannot adjourn my own de- " ſtruction; for *the judgment ſlumbreth not.* Shall I " hope time may extricate me out of theſe diffi- " culties? Alas, that will aggravate them, and

" whilſt

" whilſt I delay I periſh. It cannot be now too " ſoon to ſet about it: becauſe I know not how " ſoon it may be too late: Nor will I be fooled " with that ſuggeſtion that it is now too late, for " I am ſure if I do it not now, the time will come " when I ſhall wiſh I had done it; and if it be too " late now, it will be more ſo hereafter. Eſpecially " this would be the higheſt aggravation of my mi- " ſery, if I ſhould wholly abandon my ſelf, and " move nothing at all towards my own recovery. " All other ways are beſet with inſuperable diffi- " culties; there is but one way of hope, and this " is it: *Anceps remedium potiùs quàm nullum*, " therefore whatever the ſucceſs be, this I am re- " ſolved to make trial of.

Thus the four Lepers who were without the Gates of *Samaria*, when the Famine was within, and the Enemy laying cloſe Siege round about it, *If* (ſay they) *we ſtay here we die, and if we go into the City, the famine is there, and we die alſo. Let us therefore venture upon the Camp of the Syrians, if they kill us we can but die; and if they ſpare us, we ſhall live.* So the ſinner, " I am beſet with diffi- " culties, within are fears, without is deſpair; Hell " and Damnation are round about me; there is " but one plank of eſcape, and that is Repentance; " whether I can effect it, or God will accept it " from me is a queſtion: but hope is as cheap as " deſpair; if it be loſt labour, it is but labour " loſt; and the moſt doubtful experiment is bet- " ter than certain Damnation. 2 Kings 7. 3.

Thus by all theſe powerful inducements the ſinner is brought at laſt to a reſolution, and that brings him to actual returning, as we ſhall ſhew by and by.

CHAP.

## CHAP. III.

## Of Confeſſion and Contrition.

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§. I. *Contrition conſiſts of four parts.* 1. *Confeſſion of Guilt.* 2. *Aggravation of the fault.* 3. *Self-Condemnation.* 4. *Deprecation. All which are explained.*

§. II *The efficacy of Contrition demonſtrated.* 1. *As doing right to God's Sovereingty.* 2. *To his Wiſdom, Juſtice and Goodneſs.* 3. *To his Omniſcience.* 4. *To his Holineſs and Purity.* 5. *It gives the beſt ſecurity againſt relapſes into ſin.*

§. I. IN the foregoing Chapter we left the Prodigal in a good mind, and well reſolved what courſe to take; now therefore no doubt we ſhall find him putting in practice thoſe ingenuous purpoſes. And taking the whole ſeries of this part of the Parable together, our Saviour repreſents him as wholly taken up with theſe two things. Firſt, in a contrite and remorſeful confeſſion of his former offences. Secondly, in the actual returning to his Father, and to his duty; for as on the one hand (conſidering his former miſcarriages) he could not take the confidence to appear before his injured Father without ingenuous ſhame and ſorrow; ſo on the other ſide, he could neither content his own mind, nor hope for pardon from his Father without real amendment and actual reformation. Wherefore he joyns both together, that by the former, (*viz.*) his Contrition, he may appeaſe his Father's juſt wrath and indignation; and that by the latter, (*viz.*) Refor-

Reformation, he may be re-inſtated in his favour. Now the firſt of theſe is anſwerable to, and that which is moſt genuinely meant by the Greek word Μεταμέλεια· and the ſecond, that which they expreſs by the other word Μετάνοια· both which together make up the intire nature of true Repentance, and therefore muſt be handled by us particularly.

To begin with the former, (*viz.*) Contrition. The Son expreſſes himſelf thus, *Father I have ſinned againſt Heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy Son. Make me but as one of thy hired Servants*, &c. In which words there are theſe four things obſervable.

1. His confeſſion of Guilt, *I have ſinned.*

2. Aggravation of the fact, *I have ſinned againſt Heaven and before thee.*

3. The ſevere judgment he paſſes upon himſelf, *I am no more worthy to be called thy Son.*

4. Laſtly, His deprecation, *Yet make me as one of thy hired Servants.* All which deſerve a little conſideration, the rather becauſe we ſhall find them all exactly and literally exemplified in the true Penitent.

1. Then the Son aſſumes to himſelf his own guilt, and takes ſhame to himſelf. *I have ſinned*, &c. *Non in ætatem, non in malos conſiliarios culpam rejicit, ſed nudam parat ſine excuſatione Confeſſionem*, (ſaith the excellent *H. Grotius.*) *He excuſes not himſelf by the injudiciouſneſs of his youth, nor caſts the blame upon his evil Counſellors; neither accuſes God nor Man, but himſelf, by a plain and ingenuous acknowledgment.*

In like manner the true Penitent knows it is to no purpoſe to play the hypocrite with God, *Becauſe all things are naked and open to the eyes of him with whom we have to do. He ſeeth not as Men ſee, beholding*

*beholding the outward appearance; but he searches the hearts and tries the reins of the children of Men.* He remembers that *he that hideth his sins shall not prosper, but that he that confesseth and forsaketh them shall find mercy.* Therefore with blushing and confusion of face, saith, I have sinned and done very foolishly. Thus the poor Publican is represented by our Saviour, S. *Luke* 18. 13. whenas the Pharisee stood upon his own justification, and with a brazen impudence out-faces Heaven, *God I thank thee that I am not as other Men are*, &c. He *standing afar off* (as not thinking himself worthy to approach so great a Majesty) *not daring to lift up his eyes to Heaven*, (as dejected with the apprehension of his own demerits) *smites upon his breast* with indignation against himself, and brings out only this contrite sigh, *God be merciful to me a sinner.* And so the Psalmist *David* in that penitential Psalm of his, *Psal.* 51. *vers.* 3. *I acknowledge my transgression, and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done evil in thy sight. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my Mother conceive me*, &c. And this is the course of every Penitent, for though it be too true that Confession may be without true and compleat Repentance, yet it is impossible that Repentance should be true without Confession.

I enter not into a discourse of Confession to Men, because my Text leads me not to it, farther than as it concerns the person injured; in which case it is often necessary for the satisfaction of our Consciences, and wherever there is any ingenuity in the offended person, it must needs be very prevalent towards his forgiveness. But as for the Divine Majesty, who is alway injured in every transgression, and can never have any reparation other-

wise

wiſe than by it, it muſt needs be always reaſonable and neceſſary, as we ſhall ſhew more fully by and by.

2. But the Son contents not himſelf with a bare acknowledgment of his fault in general, but goes on to aggravate it, *I have ſinned againſt Heaven and before thee.* If we conſider the letter of thoſe words, they import, I have ſinned both againſt God and thee my Earthly Parent, for ſo the *Jews* were wont to expreſs themſelves, calling the Divine Majeſty by the name of Heaven, as we may obſerve S. *Luk.* 20. 4. *The Baptiſm of John, was it from Heaven or of Men, i. e.* Was it of God's inſtitution, or Man's invention? So alſo 1 *Macc.* 3. 18. *It is all one with Heaven to ſave with few or with many, i. e.* With the God of Heaven. And we may eaſily take notice that in moſt of the Parables of our Saviour, that which is ſometimes called the Kingdom of God, is otherwhile expreſſed by the name of the Kingdom of Heaven; and by both nothing elſe is meant but the Goſpel, that divine inſtitution of Religion: but if we attend to the intent of this acknowledgment of the Prodigal Son, the words import an aggravation of his diſobedience. *q. d.* "There was no neceſſity lay upon me to tranſ-
"greſs; thy Yoke was eaſie and reaſonable, and
"therefore in diſobeying thee, I diſobeyed God
"too: Or I muſt firſt have caſt off all reverence
"of God, before I could be undutiful towards
"thee. It was not the harſhneſs and ſeverity of
"my Father that drove me away, but my own le-
"vity and folly that betrayed me, and my ſtub-
"bornneſs that I forſook him.

And the ſame conſideration affects the heart of the Penitent: "For, (ſaith he) I have not only
"offended the Divine Majeſty, but rebelled both
"againſt

" againſt a rightful and a gracious Sovereign;
" have broken wiſe, and juſt, and equitable Laws;
" been ingrateful towards him that had obliged
" me by infinite favours; have ſlighted the moſt
" glorious propoſitions, and neglected the moſt
" gracious and condeſcending conditions of being
" happy. There was no invincible temptation up-
" on me, it was not in the power of example to
" debauch me: I was not oppreſt by fate, but have
" choſen my own deſtruction. It is not the Apo-
" ſtaſy of *Adam* that can excuſe me, for it was my
" own act: I cannot ſay, *the Fathers have eaten*
" *four grapes, and the Children's teeth are ſet on*
" *edge:* for I ſinned againſt light and Conſcience
" with full conſent, and againſt the motions of
" God's Spirit to the contrary.

After this manner the Penitent is apt to lay load upon himſelf, no body can think or ſpeak worſe of him than he thinks and confeſſes of himſelf; ſo far is he from extenuating his crimes, that no malice can paint them worſe, than grief and indignation at himſelf doth. In ſhort, with S. *Paul*, he eſteems himſelf *the chiefeſt and worſt of Sinners.*

*Judices, erravit, lapſus eſt, non putavit, ſi unquam poſthac: ad parentem ſic agi ſolet. Ad Judices non fecit, non cogitavit, falſi teſtes fictum crimen,* &c. Cic. Orat. pro Q. Ligario.

This is a quite contrary courſe to that which Men uſe to take when they plead at humane Tribunals, either they deny the fact, or extenuate, or juſtifie it; either they plead ignorance, or pretend neceſſity, or preſcribe for it from the cuſtom and prevailing example of the world: but none of theſe ways are of uſe before God, and therefore are not the pleas of the Penitent. The Argument of the Pſalmiſt (though it may ſeem a very ſtrange one) is frequent with ſuch Men, Pſal. 25. 10. *O Lord pardon my ſin, for it is great. q. d.* " I am only
" fit to magnify thy mercy, for I have ſinned be-
" yond any mercy but thine; my guilt is too great

" a bur-

" a burthen for me to bear, if thy unſpeakable mer-
" cies relieve me not. What ſhall I do unto thee,
" *O thou redeemer of Men?* Such a Soul is not only aſhamed, but loaths and abhors himſelf; his Spirit is broken, his countenance dejected, his confidence diſamounted, he feels pain and remorſe, he goes heavily, he is pricked to the heart, and cries out in the anguiſh of his Soul, What ſhall I do? But,

3. He goes on not only to accuſe, but to condemn himſelf alſo; " *I am not worthy to be called*
" *thy Son.* I deſerve to be utterly abandoned, x-
" cluded your care, and caſt out of your thoughts,
" as I caſt my ſelf out of your Family. And ſo
" the Penitent: I am ſo far, Lord, from deſer-
" ving thy favour or eternal life, that I deſerve
" nor the leaſt Crum from thy Table: *leſs then*
" *the leaſt of all thy mercies.* Nay, I acknowledge
" I have deſerved to go with ſorrow to my grave,
" and to undergo the dreadfulleſt viols of thy
" wrath.

It is very remarkable that the Prodigal doth not only thus condemn himſelf whilſt he anxiouſly ſtands expecting his doom from his Father, but even then when his Father had expreſſed compaſſion to him, had ran to meet him and kiſſed him, for ſo *ver.* 21. we find him repeating his own condemnation in the ſame words as before: And in like manner we obſerve the Apoſtle S. *Paul* after he had obtained pardon, and the great favour of Apoſtleſhip, to be continually ripping up his former ſins, and condemning himſelf for them; as if the wound bled afreſh as often as it was touched.

Thus the Penitent *always judges and condemns himſelf, that he may not be judged of the Lord.* By

ſeverity towards himſelf he recommends himſelf to the Divine Mercy; for as *Tertullian* expreſſes it, *In quantum non peperceris tibi, in tantum Deus tibi parcet.* If we like *Phineas* ſtand up and execute judgment, the Plague will be ſtayed. He that anticipates the day of Judgment by erecting a private, but impartial Tribunal, prevents the dreadfulneſs of that day. In ſhort, if we be juſt, God will be merciful; and therefore when the Penitent hath been accuſer, witneſs and judge againſt himſelf, he may then with hopes of ſucceſs become

Tert. de Pœnit.

4. In the fourth place interceſſour for himſelf alſo, and deprecate the divine diſpleaſure, and implore his favour. So the Son doth here, *make me as one of thy hired ſervants. q. d.* "Let me not "be utterly caſt out of thy Family, but have at "leaſt this inſtance of thy favour, that I may ſtill "retain ſome relation to thee. And ſo the Penitent, now that he hath received his ſentence of condemnation within himſelf, ſues out his pardon. "O take not my confeſſion meerly as an argument "of my guilt, but as an evidence of my contrition, *Break not the bruiſed reed, nor quench the "ſmoaking flax.* 'Tis thy prerogative, O Lord, "to pardon, and what pleaſure is there in my "blood? Will the Lord be angry for ever? will "his jealouſie burn like fire? O conſider my frame! "remember I am but duſt and aſhes, call to mind "thy mercies of old, thou art God and not Man, "and as much as the Heavens are higher than the "Earth, ſo are thy mercies above the mercies of "a Man: *Turn thy face away from my ſins, and blot out all my tranſgreſſions. Make me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right ſpirit in me. Caſt me not away from thy preſence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from*

*from me. Give me the comfort of thy help again, and ſtabliſh me with thy free Spirit*, &c. Pſal. 51. 9, 10, 11, 12.

Saint *Cyprian* reports it to have been the cuſtom of the primitive Penitents out of their quick and pricking ſenſe of ſin, and the more effectually to recommend themſelves to the mercies of God, and the favour of his Church, earneſtly to impore the Martyrs, that in the midſt of their ſufferings and ſharpeſt agonies, they would remember them in their Prayers, thinking ſuch affectionate interceſſion of thoſe that poured out their blood and requeſts together, muſt needs be available both with God and Man. But the Penitent addreſſes himſelf alſo to a higher and more prevalent Advocate, who adds the incenſe of his own ſacrifice to the prayers of Men, and makes them come up as ſweet odours before the Almighty; and who is exalted at God's right hand to this end, that he may give ſucceſs to the prayers of ſuch contrite perſons. To which add, that not only the deep apprehenſions of guilt and of danger which ſuch a perſon (we now ſpeak of) is under, muſt needs make him ardent and importunate, and to cry mightily to God; but alſo the Scripture aſſures us that the Holy Ghoſt is wont to aſſiſt ſuch *with ſighs and groans which are unutterable.*

§. II. Now for the acceptableneſs of this penitent confeſſion of which we are ſpeaking. Although it be certain that our Heavenly Father takes no delight in the pitiful moans, in the tears and lamentations of his Creatures, and is moſt true that he is not to be wrought upon by addreſſes and complemental forms, by the accent of Men's voice, by the rhetorick of tears, nor any thing of

that nature; becauſe he is not ſubject to paſſions as Men are: yet having demonſtrated already in the former Chapter that the Divine Majeſty hath no reſtraint upon him but what himſelf pleaſes, and that all his actions towards his Creatures are ſo ſubject to his wiſdom, that when-ever there is juſt cauſe for mercy, he can ſhew it notwithſtanding the unchangeableneſs of his Nature, the rigour of his Laws, or the demand of his Juſtice; if now we alſo make it appear from his own mouth, and from thoſe diſcoveries which he hath been pleaſed to make of himſelf, that the aforeſaid humble and contrite addreſſes are agreeable to the deſigns of his wiſdom, and therefore required by him as the conditions of pardon; then there can be no doubt but that they will in their kind be as acceptable to his Divine Majeſty, and as ſucceſsful on the part of the ſinner, as the penitent Son's ſubmiſſion was with his earthly Parent.

And this will be eaſily evident if we conſider that whereas the evil of ſin lies principally in the diſhonour it reflects upon the divine perfections, ſuch penitential acknowledgments as we have deſcribed, do in great meaſure repair that injury, and do right to all the Divine Attributes, as we will inſtance in particular.

1. Sin is an invaſion of God's Authority and Sovereignty over us, inaſmuch as he that wilfully breaks any Law of God proclaims himſelf *ſui Juris*, or *Lawleſs*, and ſaith with thoſe in the Goſpel, *we will not have this Lord to rule over us.* Now penitent acknowledgment, though it cannot recal the act which is paſt, yet it revokes and retracts the affront, and ſettles God's Authority again.

2. Sin is an impeachment of God's wiſdom, juſtice and goodneſs at once; for he that allows himſelf

ſelf in the commiſſion of a ſin, lays an imputation upon God, as if he had either not fore-ſeen what liberty was fit to be allowed to his Creatures, or had not ordered the frame and conſtitution of things with that decency and benignity that mankind could comfortably acquieſce in, without temptation to intrench upon that for his own neceſſary accommodation. Now on the contrary, confeſſion takes ſhame and folly, and unreaſonableneſs to our ſelves, and juſtifies the wiſdom and equity of all God's conſtitutions. In this ſenſe we may take that expreſſion, *Luke* 7. 29. *The Publicans juſtified God, being baptized with the Baptiſm of John, i. e.* They entring into a penitential ſtate which *John*'s Baptiſm initiated them into, condemned themſelves, and proclaimed the righteouſneſs of God's methods.

3. Sin is a tacit denial of God's Omniſcience; the ſinner ſaith with them in the Pſalmiſt, *Tuſh, doth God ſee, and is there knowledge in the moſt High?* Pſal. 73. 11. And with thoſe other in *Job*, *How doth God know, can he judge through the dark Clouds? Thick Clouds are a covering to him that he ſeeth not, and he walketh in the Circuit of Heaven*, Job 22. 13, 14. Either they conclude with the *Epicureans* that it is below the Majeſty of God to mind the affairs of Men, or that it would create him too much trouble and buſineſs, or ſome odd conceit or other they may well be preſumed to have, who dare adventure to ſin, foraſmuch as the conſideration of an All-ſeeing Eye would give the moſt curbing check to ſin that can be. And indeed, this Attribute is one of the moſt glorious perfections of the Divine Nature; and ſo neceſſary that it is not intelligible how he ſhould be God, that is, how he ſhould govern the world for the

preſent, or judge it hereafter, without it: and conſequently it is (if not the only foundation, yet) the immediate obligation to all worſhip and religious obſervance. For ſuppoſe a God, as the *Epicureans* did, that either could not, or would not mind the actions of Men, and make him otherwiſe as great, excellent and adorable as we will, yet will it be impoſſible to reſtrain Men from hypocriſie and contempt of him whilſt they are under no apprehenſions that their actions and carriage towards him are eyed by him. Now he that ingenuouſly confeſſes his ſin, and takes ſhame to himſelf for it, doth honour to this Divine Perfection, and upholds the Pillar of the World, and thereby recommends himſelf to the Divine mercy.

Baruch 2. 18.

It was the ſaying of *Joſhua* to *Achan*, Joſ. 7. 9. *My Son, give glory to God, and confeſs thy fault. q. d.* Thou haſt diſhonoured God by thy ſin, and both reproached his wiſdom in making ſuch a Law, and alſo called in queſtion his Omniſcience by thy daring to violate it: now therefore make him the beſt amends thou canſt by an ingenuous confeſſion, and make it appear, that though when thou waſt tempted to do wickedly, thou wert ſo fooliſh as to promiſe thy ſelf ſecurity; yet now upon more deliberate thoughts, thou acknowledgeſt there is nothing can hide thee from him.

4. Such acknowledgments as aforeſaid, do right to the holineſs and purity of God: for thereby the ſinner expreſſing his ſhame, and bluſhing at his own impurity, ſeems to loath himſelf for his unlikeneſs to the Divine Majeſty, who is the chief and original perfection.

To which add in the laſt place, that beſides that in this confeſſion of ſin, the ſinner places himſelf in

in the neareſt poſture, and under the very eye of God, and the quickeſt apprehenſions of him, and the greateſt awefulneſs of his Majeſty; he alſo puts a brand and odious mark upon all ſin, and by his thus ſuffering for ſin in the ſenſe of his Soul *condemns ſin in the fleſh*; and withal expreſſes a great diſtaſt of it, ſhews an abhorrence, a mind alienated from it, and ſo conſequently by that ſenſe of the bitterneſs of it, gives the beſt ſecurity againſt relapſes into it again. Upon all which it is not untruly ſaid, *quem pœnitet peccâſſe, pœnè eſt innocens*; and though it be beſt of all not to ſin, yet he is in a good degree towards innocency, who is thus penitent for his offences; and conſequently in a fair way for pardon.

With reſpect to which the Pſalmiſt, who both could and would (if that would have done as well) have brought the moſt coſtly Sacrifices to God to have atoned his ſin, and made his peace with him, yet pronounces *the Sacrifice of God to be only a contrite Spirit, and that a broken and contrite Spirit God will not deſpiſe.* Thoſe other Sacrifices it ſeems though God permitted them, and in ſome caſes accepted, yet were not of his inſtitution at firſt, only they were ways which Men thought apt to expreſs their homage and dependence upon God, or by which to acknowledge their gratitude, or by the coſt of them to impoſe a mulct upon themſelves for offending, or otherwiſe by being converted to the uſe of thoſe that attended immediately upon him, might be ſuppoſed to be a means to propitiate him towards them; as if in the language of our Saviour Men ſought this way *to make to themſelves friends of the Mammon of unrighteouſneſs:* Notwithſtanding in themſelves all thoſe coſtly oblations ſeemed to reflect diſhonour upon

God; as repreſenting him a neceſſitous and indigent Deity; for which cauſe ſeveral of the wiſeſt and beſt Philoſophers of old forbad all coſtly Sacrifices, and required only ſuch things as might properly be reputed τιμὴ τῆ ἀνενδεᾶς θεᾶ, (as the *Platoniſts* expreſs it) *i. e. the worſhip of a full and perfect Being*: and ſuch eſpecially is this of a broken and contrite heart, which as it is that which every Man hath to give that will, ſo is fitteſt to be the ſacrifice of all mankind to the common Father of them; and as it coſt them leaſt, ſo it doth the trueſt honour to him.

And whereas *Paganiſm* admitted no repentance, and in their Philoſophick writings we meet often with expiations, and luſtrations, but no ſuch thing as repentance; the reaſon muſt be becauſe they had no right notions of God, commonly conſidering him only under the notion of rigid fate, or of abſolute ſovereignty, without any apprehenſion of benignity or compaſſion in him: which whoſo rightly underſtands God, muſt needs conceive to be in him in an eminent degree, as we have ſhewed before; and he that ſo conſiders him, can have no reaſon to doubt but thoſe inſtances of penitence we are now upon, are very acceptable to him, eſpecially if they come attended with real reformation, which we come now in the next place to ſpeak of, as the ſecond part of the Penitent's Reſolution, and the laſt and principal point of Repentance.

CHAP.

# CHAP. IV.

## Of Actual Returning, or Reformation.

### The CONTENTS.

*Actual Reformation conſiſts in three things.* 1. *Care of God's Worſhip.* 2. *Conſcience of all his Commands.* 3. *Submiſſion to his Providence. All which are deſcribed according to ſuch meaſures as are practicable in themſelves, neceſſarily required by God, and conſcientiouſly obſerved by by all true Converts.*

WE have hitherto in the letter of the Parable ſeen the (formerly extravagant) Son performing the firſt part of his reſolution, confeſſing his fault, condemning his folly, falling at his Father's feet, and imploring his pardon. But there was ſomething elſe meant when he ſaid, *I will return to my Father*; and he was not ignorant that filial reverence and obedience for the future, was the beſt Apology for his former trangreſſions: for though he knew how great an intereſt the very relation of a Son gives in the affections of a Father, and albeit the ſaying of the Apoſtle is eſpecially and moſt remarkably verified in the charity of Parents, that it *beareth all things, hopeth all things, believeth all things*; for they readily believe well of their Children, becauſe they ſo paſſionately deſire it ſhould be ſo: notwithſtanding, the Son could not think his Father ſo ſoft and eaſy as to be impoſed upon with words and ceremonies, and himſelf was not now ſo ill-natured as to go about to abuſe

abuſe ſo much goodneſs, if it had been in his power. Wherefore the Text ſaith, verſ. 20. *So he aroſe and came to his Father*, *i. e.* he did not only change his note, his addreſs, his countenance, but he changed his courſe; he returned to his Father, and to the duty of a Son.

And we have under this type (in the former part of it) ſeen deſcribed the preface and introduction to repentance towards God; namely the ſinner bewailing his ſin, taking ſhame to himſelf, under agonies of mind, pricked to the heart, humbly imploring the divine favour, and crying earneſtly for mercy. But this is not all that repentance means, the principal part of it is yet behind, *(viz.)* actual Reformation. This is that which every awakened Conſcience in its agonies promiſes and reſolves upon; this God expects, and every ſincere Convert really performs: for without this all the reſt is but empty pomp and pageantry, and meer hipocriſy, as we ſhall ſhew anon. But when this is added to the former, ſuch a perſon from thenceforth is a new Man, and in a new eſtate; he hath compleatly made his return to God, as the Son in the Text is ſaid to have actually returned to his Father.

I have noted heretofore that all irreligion and profaneneſs is wont in the language of the Scripture to be expreſſed by the phraſe of *departing from God*, or *going out from him*, or *forſaking him*; and ſo the whole practice of Religion is contrariwiſe ſet forth by *drawing nigh to*, or *coming to God*; particularly *Heb.* 11. 6. προσερχόμενος τῷ θεῷ, *he that cometh to God*, *q. d.* he that becomes a Proſelyte to Religion, (for from thence doth that word Proſelyte take its original.) Wherefore now we will firſt obſerve what is implyed by this phraſe of

of the Son's returning or coming to his Father; and in proportion thereto deſcribe this moſt important buſineſs of the Penitent's returning to God, which is his actual Converſion or Reformation: and in the former theſe three things ſeem plainly to be comprehended.

1. *That the Son now returns home to his Father's family and preſence.*
2. *That he returns to the duty of a Son, by obedience and compliance with his Father's commands.*
3. *That he ſubmits to his Father's government and proviſion.*

Therefore in the latter, namely, converſion to God, theſe three things muſt ſemblably be implied.

1. *That the Penitent puts himſelf under the eye of God, and lives in a conſtant practice of piety and devotion.*
2. *That he frames himſelf to univerſal obedience to all God's commands.*
3. *That he gives himſelf up to the divine diſpoſal, and intirely ſubmits to his providence and government.*

1. Concerning the firſt of theſe, there is nothing more evident or remarkable to all experience and obſervation, than the great fervor of devotion in all true Converts from an evil life; inſomuch that there is not that Man to be found under ſuch a character, but preſently with great ſolemnity and ſerioufneſs he ſets up the worſhip of God; to which purpoſe we find in the Hiſtory of the Acts of the Apoſtles, Σεβόμενοι, *Worſhippers*, or *Devout perſons*, to be the common name by which Converts to Religion *V. Mede. diſc. 3. in Act. 17. 4.*

gion are expreſſed; and theſe, *Acts* 13. 48. are ſaid to be Τεταγμένοι εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον, *Candidates of eternal life*, or *put into order and diſpoſed for ſalvation.* Compare *verſ.* 43. with 48. More particularly it is obſervable of S. *Paul*, that when from a ſuperſtitious Phariſee and bitter Enemy of Chriſtianity, he was reclaimed and made a Chriſtian; the aſſurance that God gives to *Ananias* of the truth of his converſion, is *Acts* 9. 11. *Behold he prays.* And ſo of *Manaſſes*, 2 *Chron.* 33. 18. amongſt the inſtances of his real reformation the Scripture takes eſpecial notice of *the prayer that he prayed.*

And this is ſo univerſal a truth, that I think from hence it cometh to paſs that thoſe who have a mind hypocritically to put on the guiſe and appearance of Religion, are wont to be notably careful in this point: for ſo the Phariſees cloaked all their Villanies with this garb of Piety. Now hypocriſie would miſs altogether of its deſign if it did not reſemble the truth of things; and uſually their over-ſolicitude and over-doing herein betrays them to act a part only in Religion,

But it is not only the duty of prayer which the true Penitent expreſſes his Converſion by, (though this be by ſome too phantaſtically called *Duty*, as if all Piety conſiſted in that only,) for as the literal Prodigal returns to his Father's Houſe and Family, ſo the myſtical returns to God's Houſe, which is his Church, and aſſociates himſelf with God's Servants in all the offices of Religion: *(viz.)* in hearing the word, reading, meditation, ſacraments,
Pſal. 27. 4. *&c.* Now he thinks *a day ſpent in God's Courts better than a thouſand; and had rather be a doorkeeper in the houſe of the* Lord, *than to dwell in the tents of the wicked.* This one thing he deſires of the Lord, and is moſt paſſionate in, *that he may dwell*

*dwell in the houſe of the Lord all the days of his life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his Temple.* And he ſo highly values the privilege of God's Church, that no private opinion, no trifling ſcrupuloſity, nor petty diſguſt, ſhall ever alienate him from it. Here he finds himſelf fortified and incouraged by the great examples of holy Men, his Prayers ſtrengthned by the concurrence of all good people; here he is under the publick diſpenſations of the means of grace and knowledge, the very plainneſs and ſimplicity of which he now with the great Convert S. *Auſtin* values and admires more than all the Greek or Roman Eloquence of Speech, or ſubtilty of Philoſophy; to which every thing elſe ſeemed flat and inſipid before. Above all, the holy Sacrament puts him into an ecſtaſie; in this he thinks himſelf in God's preſence in an extraordinary manner, and admitted a gueſt at his Table, the Crums of which he thinks himſelf unworthy of: here he refreſhes his hungry Soul with the Bread of Life, and his wounded Conſcience by the Blood of his Crucified Saviour; and in both he thinks he ſees his provoked, but compaſſionate Father, ſtand with open Arms to receive him. This he approaches with great reverence, with ſhame and ſorrow for his ſins paſt, together with faith and hope in God's mercy, and will therefore never be negligent of it.

In theſe and all other duties of Religion, both publick and private, the Convert expreſſes ſuch an excellent ſpirit, and extraordinary zeal as cannot but be very obſervable; nay, his fervor is ſo great in theſe things, that the only danger is of running into ſome exceſs, leſt he outgo the health and ſtrength of his Body, and forget the neceſſity of the common affairs of life.

It

It is true, there is great diverſity in theſe paſſionate expreſſions of devotion, according to the difference of Mens tempers and conſtitutions; but yet in every true Convert, it is at the loweſt quite another thing from the common flatneſs and formality that is too eaſie to be ſeen in other Men: nay, the tranſports of this kind in new Converts are uſually ſo great, that it often gives them occaſion afterwards to queſtion their ſtation, and to doubt whether they have not apoſtatized and *faln from their firſt love*; when they find they cannot maintain thoſe Spring-tides conſtantly at the ſame height through the whole courſe of their lives. For the ſake of which this is to be added; that it is no argument againſt a Man's ſincerity, that he wants ſome of the paſſionate expreſſions of devotion which he had at firſt, in regard then the freſh ſenſe he had of his miſcarriages, and of his horrible danger, together with the raviſhing joy at the firſt glimpſe of God's mercy in *Chriſt*, were able ſtrangely to move all his powers, and to draw even thoſe bodily paſſions into compliance with the ſenſe of the mind, which muſt certainly flag afterwards. And therefore though it be a ſure ſign he is no Convert, (I mean, from a debauched and wicked life) who had no experience of ſomething extraordinary in this kind at firſt; yet on the other ſide, it is no ſign of decaying in grace, if he find not the like all along.

2. But to proceed: Secondly, when the Son aroſe and went to his Father, it is implied, that he became obedient to his commands, as well as that he lived in his preſence and family. And accordingly the Penitent in the next place contents not himſelf with any or all of the forementioned acts of devotion; as not intending to put off God with comple-

complemental addreſſes, (for all worſhip without obedience is no better) but applies himſelf with all humility and ſeriouſneſs to frame his life according to his commands. Heretofore he was a Son of *Belial*, lawleſs and diſobedient, but now he ſaith with S. *Paul* upon his converſion, Acts 9. 6. *What wilt thou have me to do, Lord?* He hath now found what hard ſervice the Devil puts his Vaſſals to, and having had ſo bad a Maſter of him, he doth not diſcourage himſelf with ſuſpicions, but ſubmits his neck to the yoke of *Chriſt Jeſus*, and doth not ſay *it is grievous*, as being of opinion with the *Faliſci* who told *Fabricius*, *Melius nos ſub veſtro imperio quàm ſub noſtris legibus victuri ſumus*. God's ſervice is perfect freedom, and it is liberty enough to obey wiſdom and goodneſs. Livy, *lib.* 5.

Accordingly he endeavours from henceforth to live in all *the ſtatutes and commandments of the Lord blameleſs, and exerciſes himſelf to have a Conſcience void of offence both towards God and Man.* He confines not his care to ſome one branch or part of his duty, which is the common guiſe of Hypocrites, but reſolves to be univerſally good and holy: For he not only conſiders that one ſin is ſufficient to ruine a Man as well as many, (as one diſeaſe may deſtroy a Man's life as well as a complication) but alſo he obſerves, that the main difficulty of vertue lies in that Men do not uniformly carry on the whole buſineſs before them, and ſo the Devil gets that ground in one place which he ſeems to loſe in another. Beſides, the very principle that acts and governs him is the hearty love of God and goodneſs, which makes him have an equal hatred to all ſin, and a zeal of every duty.

He

He forſakes all his debauches for the pleaſure of a good Conſcience, and makes experiment whether victory over his paſſions be not as delightful as the gratification of them; and whether intellectual joys be not as raviſhing as ſenſual enjoyments; and a regular converſation as eaſy and agreeable as the lawleſs and licentious. He brings his ſenſes in ſubjection to his reaſon, and makes all thoſe powers and faculties tributary to Religion which before made War againſt it. "This head of mine (ſaith "he) which was wont to be employed in contri-"vances for the World, or in catering for my "luſts, ſhall now be exerciſed in ſtudying how I "may do moſt honour to my Maker. This wit "which was wont to go out in froth, or in ſcof-"fing at all that was ſerious, ſhall now make Apo-"logies for what before it blaſphemed. This "tongue ſhall learn to bleſs, that was uſed to cur-"ſing and ſwearing. My hands ſhall now diſpenſe "as liberally to charitable purpoſes, as they have "ſordidly raked together before; I will be as ex-"emplary for ſobriety and chaſtity, as ever I was "notorious for exceſſes; and wherever I have "wronged any body in my dealings, I will now "ſpare from my ſelf to make them a recompence. "In ſhort, by the grace of God from henceforward "there is neither pleaſure ſhall tempt me, nor pro-"fit allure me, nor ambition corrupt me, nor ex-"ample ſway me to do any thing which I know to "be evil; and on the other ſide, there ſhall nei-"ther difficulty diſcourage me, nor tediouſneſs of "the courſe weary me in the race of vertue and "holineſs.

And to the intent that he may always make good this ground, and perſevere in this courſe, he calls in all the Auxiliaries of Divine Grace, places himſelf

himſelf under the moſt advantageous circumſtances, and retrenches himſelf againſt all aſſaults or ſurpriſals. Herewithal he hath a principal care to keep his thoughts pure and holy, that there may be no combuſtible matter in him for the *Devil's fiery darts* to take hold of, nor any beginning of a mutiny within him of the fleſh againſt the ſpirit, by which means a paſſage may be opened to the Enemy. And yet when this is done he will be always upon his guard too, not truſting wholly to the innocency of his intentions, as knowing both the ſubtilty and enterprizing nature of the Devil. And that this watch may be conſtantly kept up, he is ſure not to allow himſelf the leaſt degree of intemperance which would at leaſt weaken his reaſon, and inflame his paſſion: and farther, he is very choice of his company, and very deſirous to fortifie himſelf by good neighbourhood and acquaintance, that he may be quickened by their examples: and laſtly, he will be always doing ſome good thing or other, that temptation may not find him at leiſure to give it entertainment.

Moreover, in conſideration that he hath lived a great while unprofitably and done far leſs than his duty, he will ſtrive if it be poſſible to do more than is matter of expreſs duty now to make amends for former failing, and therefore is far from the cold and frugal piety of thoſe Men that make a great ſtir in ſeeking the *minimum quod ſic*, as if they would divide a hair in Religion, and be ſure to do no more than needs muſt; and were afraid of loving God too much, or bidding too high for the Kingdom of Heaven: for though it be true

Οἱ πνευματικοὶ πάντα περίεργοσιν ἐπιθυμίᾳ καὶ πόθῳ; καὶ τοῦτο δηλοῦσι τὸ καὶ ὑπερβαίνειν τὰ προστάγματα *S. Chryſoſt.* in *Rom.* 8.

Hereof we have a great instance in St. *Paul*, 1 *Cor.* 9. 16. See also *Luke* 17. 10.

that there are no works of supererogation, as some vainly speak, *i. e.* whereby we may make God a debtor to us, or that we shall have an overplus, and be able to contribute towards a publick stock besides our own necessity; yet if a Man, conscious of his own many failings, shall therefore (to shew that notwithstanding he loves God sincerely) oblige himself, suppose to pray oftner, or give Alms more liberally than is expresly required of him, this sure will not be blameable.

And again, being heartily troubled for what evils he hath committed heretofore, he indeavours to retract and undo them as much as is possible, not only labouring to prevent the contagion of his example, but where the case will admit it, rescinding and nullifying the very effects. So *Manasses*, that had set up Idolatry, effectually reformed it; and *Zacheus*, besides the half of his goods which he gave to the Poor, made a four-fold restitution where-ever he had wronged any. The Jaylor washes the stripes he had inflicted, and S. *Paul* zealously preached the doctrine which before he persecuted.

Lastly, Such is the indignation which the true Convert hath against himself for his former rebellions, and such an holy jealousie hath he over himself lest he should relapse, that he is in danger of another extream; for whereas heretofore he too much indulged the humour of his Body, now he is ready to abridge it to such a degree as to indanger his health: perhaps in times past he lived in too much gaiety, and now so gravely that there is some danger his strictness should four into austerity; heretofore he lived lawlesly, and now is ready by an ἀμέλεια τῆς εὐθολκῆς, a vehement inclining the contrary way to fall into scrupulosity, and in the words

words of S. *Auſtin*, *Factum horretur licitum ob vicinitatem illiciti*, which I render by thoſe of our Saviour, *He ſtrains at a Gnat now, that was wont to ſwallow a Camel.*

Thoſe that have had experience of new and zealous Converts, know this which I have laſt ſaid to be too true, and therefore thoſe that are concerned in the management of ſuch Perſons, find it becoming their prudence, not only to inſtruct them in the holy ways of the Goſpel, but alſo to interpret to them the liberty of the Goſpel. For in defect of ſuch care and prudence, it very often unhappily comes to paſs, that evil Men and ſeducers, working upon that well meant but intemperate zeal, find advantage of inſinuating their curioſities, their ſuperſtitions, nay, their very moroſities, and the diſtinctive Badges of their peculiar factions; and in conſequence thereof both indiſpoſe theſe honeſt minds to ſome of that which is their duty in Church and State, and alſo render them uncomfortable in themſelves, and ſcandalous to Religion.

But abating this laſt thing (which is a bad weed, but an argument of a good ſoil) all that which I have been ſaying otherwiſe, is in the temper and practice of every true Convert, as is moſt eminently to be ſeen in all the Primitive Chriſtians, who were converted from Paganiſm or Judaiſm to *Chriſt Jeſus*, but eſpecially the former; the whole world ſaw them ſtrangely improved and metamorphoſed, to uſe the word of the Apoſtle; upon which account the Primitive Fathers, *Origen*, *Juſtin Martyr*, *Euſebius*, *Lactantius*, *&c.* gloried in the efficacy of the Goſpel, and ſhamed the blind Pagans out of their contempt of it; they deſpiſed it for the plainneſs and familiarity of the phraſe, but could

Rom. 12. 2. ἀλλὰ μεταμορφοῦσθε.

*Non abſcondit vitia, ſed abſcindit.* Lact. l. 3. cap. 26.

could not deny but it was mighty in operation, far beyond all the admired writings of Philoſophers; for whereas all the efficacy of them uſually extended no farther than to furniſh Men's heads with notions, or to gild the out-ſide; this changed them thoroughly, made the Drunkard become grave, the laſcivious perſon chaſt and modeſt, the griping oppreſſor merciful and liberal; and in ſhort, made the vicious and debauched become uniformly holy and vertuous. And this is the ſecond thing intimated in the Son's returning to his Father, he returned to his duty and obedience. But,

3. Thirdly and laſtly, when the Son returned to his Father, it is implied that he then ſubmitted himſelf to his Father's providence and accommodations; that whereas heretofore the way of his Father's Family was too frugal and parſimonious for him, he muſt live at an higher rate, and be better provided for; and therefore defired to have his portion in his own hands, that he might pleaſe himſelf: now the caſe is altered, for he found that his prodigality had brought him to rags, and his riots to hunger, and the danger of being ſtarved: this therefore had like to have broke his heart, but to be ſure it hath broke his ſpirit; and now he will not capitulate, nor preſcribe rules to his Father, but be content with any thing; *make me but as one of thy hired ſervants*, &c.

It was the cuſtom of Penitents of old to put on Sack-cloth, and to ſprinkle themſelves with Aſhes, as acknowledging themſelves to be vile Earth, and unworthy of the meaneſt accomodations. And what was thus done emblematically on the ſolemn times of humiliation, is really accompliſhed in every ſincere Convert. He is ſenſible that (as we have diſcourſed heretofore) pride began his ruine, and

and therefore humility muſt recover him. Time was, that he ſwelled againſt God, as the proud waves againſt their banks, ſtrove to break down and over-run all the reſtraints of Providence; becauſe he could not bring his condition to his mind, therefore he ſwelled and murmured, raged and blaſphemed: "why muſt he be poor and limitted, "ſick or of ſhort continuance? why (ſince the "world was made for Man) ſhould not he have "his full ſwing, and like *Leviathan*, ſport him-"ſelf therein? he was ready to ſuſpect ſome malevolent or evil genius governed the world, and not ſuch a wiſe and benign Being as Men talk of. In ſhort, as the Laws of God were too ſtrait, ſo was his Providence, and he could brook neither of them.

But as we have ſeen (upon this change) his compliance with the former ſo we ſhall now ſee his conformity to the latter. He hath now like *Nebuchadnezzar*, been turned out to graſs, till by his afflictions he was brought to acknowledge *that the moſt High ruleth in the Kingdoms of Men*; and now the Clay hath learned not to diſpute with the Potter, *why haſt thou made me thus?* Now whatever condition it pleaſes God to put him in, he acknowledges it is better than he deſerves; if he will that he be a Beggar, in diſgrace, ſickneſs, priſon; where and what he pleaſes, ſo he have mercy upon his Soul, He hath learnt to ſay with *Jacob*, *Leſs than the leaſt of all God's mercies*; and Gen. 32. 10.
with the *Iſraelites* humbled by their captivity; *Thou always puniſheſt us leſs than our iniquities have deſerved*; or with the ſame in the Lamentations, *It is the Lord's mercy that we are not conſumed, and wherefore doth a living man complain, a man, for*

*the puniſhment of his ſins*? He not only conſiders the irreſiſtible power of God, and yields, as knowing there is no contending with him; but he acknowledges alſo his ſovereignty, and the right which the great Creator of the world hath to diſpoſe of him and all other Creatures as he pleaſes; and therefore quarrels not prerogative, but ſaith with old *Eli*, *It is the Lord, let him do what ſeemeth him good*; and with the Pſalmiſt, *I was dumb and opened not my mouth, for it was thy doing. q. d.* " If I ſaw nothing but rigid fate " over-bearing me, though I knew it was even " then to no purpoſe to contend, yet I ſhould be " tempted to repine at my hard fortune; but " when I ſaw God in it, I laid my hand upon " my mouth; for that word ſpeaks wiſdom, ju- " ſtice, and goodneſs, as well as power; every " of which are infinitely above my match. " and when I reflect upon my ſelf, I cannot but " diſcover, that it is not mere power and will in " God that oppreſſes me, but it was juſt with " him to appoint me this adverſity; nay, I can- " not but own his wiſdom too in it; he under- " ſtands my frame, and therefore is beſt able to " judge what is good and neceſſary for me: *My* " *heavenly Father knows what things I have need* " *of*: And conſequently I muſt conclude (ſince " he hath ordered it ſo) that it was beſt for me " that I ſhould be put into the condition I am " in: He ſaw I was not able to bear a full tide " of proſperity, and therefore ſent croſs winds to " check me; he foreſaw I ſhould be apt to luxu- " riate and run riot again, ſhould he have planted " me in the warm Sun, and therefore he made " choice of the ſhade for me.

Upon

Upon all theſe conſiderations, and eſpecially that which I firſt ſuggeſted; namely, his modeſt reflexion upon his own demerits, and therewithall the contemplation of that tranſcendent happineſs in another world, which will abundantly compenſate all defects in this; the Penitent is brought intirely to ſurrender himſelf to the divine will. So that he doth not only patiently abide what he cannot help, but in ſome good meaſure of chearfulneſs, harmoniouſly falls in with the divine providence. " I will (ſaith he) no longer have any " will of my own, *but thy will be done:* as I will " endeavour to frame the courſe of my life and " actions by thy Laws and revealed will; ſo my " mind, my will and paſſions, ſhall be ſhaped in " conformity to thy ſecret will.

This temper every true Penitent muſt and doth arrive at in good meaſure, for until this be done, the principle of pride, which was the firſt ſpring of apoſtaſie, is not deſtroyed in him; and it will be impoſſible that he ſhould diſcharge the former part of active obedience, unleſs this paſſive frame be in conjunction with it; ſince a malecontent and murmuring ſpirit can never become a good and dutiful ſubject of God's Kingdom, becauſe he plainly betrays that he neither loves nor reverences him, and therefore will not obey him. Beſides, that moſt aſſuredly ſuch a temper affords perpetual invitation and incouragement to the Devil to be attempting upon him to inflame him into ſome rebellion againſt God. Whereas the Man that is contented with his condition, that ſubmits to God, diſcourages Satan in all his attempts of ſtirring up ſedition, he gives him no hold, he diſarms and defeats him.

This therefore with the two former make up the ſumm of Religion, and conſequently the intire character of a true Convert, and the juſt terms of his reconciliation with the offended Majeſty of Heaven. By theſe three ſteps the Son recovered himſelf and his Father's favour. And thus the ſinner returns to God.

CHAP.

# CHAP. V.

## Of the neceſſity of Actual Reformation.

### The CONTENTS.

§. I. *A recital of ſeveral looſe opinions about repentance, which debauch Men's practice in this important affair.*

§. II. *Four Arguments demonſtrating the abſurdity of all thoſe opinions jointly, and the neceſſity of bringing forth ſuch fruits of repentance as are deſcribed in the former Chapter.* 1. *From Scripture.* 2. *From the nature of God.* 3. *From the nature of Heaven and Hell.* 4. *From the nature of Conſcience.*

WHilſt in the foregoing Chapter I endeavoured in three inſtances plainly and accurately to deſcribe actual returning to God, as the condition of reconciliation with our Heavenly Father, as I think I out-went not the figurative intimations of the Parable, ſo I am moſt confident that therein I dealt faithfully with the Souls of all ſuch Men as are concerned in that diſcourſe; neither requiring more, nor admitting leſs than what is both fit for God to accept, and for Men to yield to him: therefore it was reaſonably to be hoped that Mens judgments being convinced herein, they would practiſe accordingly, and ſo I might proceed immediately to the third and laſt part of the Parable; and there ſhew the admirable ſucceſs of this method, and the comfortable greeting betwixt the Father of Spirits and his returning Children.

Notwith-

Notwithſtanding, partly becauſe I am aware in the general how willing men are even to put a cheat upon themſelves for a cheap and an eaſie cure; and that to ſuch that which we have been diſcourſing will ſeem to be *durus ſermo, a hard Chapter*, (as we ſay;) and partly alſo I am not ignorant that there are abundance of Mountebanks in Theology, who pretend to adminiſter comfort to troubled Conſciences upon far eaſier terms: that therefore I may wholly omit nothing that I conceive uſeful in this important affair, I will here (though briefly) demonſtrate the truth and abſolute neceſſity of what we have now laid down; but firſt I think it not amiſs to take notice of the principal of thoſe miſtakes which make it neceſſary that I ſo do; and they may be reduced to theſe four heads.

Kimch. *in Iſa.* 59. 1. It was the opinion of ſome of the *Jewiſh* Doctors that when the *Meſſias* came, there would be no neceſſity of Repentance at all, as if his interceſſion ſhould perfectly excuſe Men all the trouble of *working out their own ſalvation with fear and trembling*. And alike abſurd conceit hath poſſeſſed ſome Chriſtians, that nothing is to be done by us but truſting and relying upon *Chriſt Jeſus*, and his ſacrifice and ſatisfaction; as if he had not only ſatisfied for the tranſgreſſions of the old Covenant, but having brought in no new one, had ſet Men perfectly at liberty from all moral obligation; or as if it were a derogation from the merits of *Chriſt*'s death that any thing ſhould be required of us in order to juſtification. This is the doctrine of the *Antinomians*. Which ſome carry yet higher, and ſuppoſe juſtification from Eternity, founded meerly in the ſecret decree of God, and ſo not only exclude repentance, but even the mediation of *Chriſt Jeſus* himſelf.

2. There

2. There is a ſecond ſort of Men, and thoſe called Chriſtians too, that require ſomething on Man's part though very little, and that they call Attrition, by which they mean ſome ſlight ſorrow for ſin, which they ſay together with the Sacrament of penance or confeſſion, will reconcile a Man to God, without ſo much as contrition, or true and hearty ſorrow for the evil of ſin: This is the expreſs doctrine of the Church of *Rome*, and is very like the common doctrine of the *Jews*, that confeſſion and ſacrifice were ſufficient for repentance and reconciliation; as if ſin had no great evil in it ſelf, or no great contrariety to the divine nature, only for form or order-ſake they thought fit that ſome ſhame or mulct ſhould be put upon it; and ſo a few tears, or ſomething of no great moment, ſhall quit all the old ſcore, and purchaſe a new licence to ſin again.

C. Trent. *Seſſ.* 4. *Cap.* 14. Maim. in *Teſhubbæ apud* Lightf. *Hor. Hebr.*

3. Another opinion goes farther yet, requiring not only external expreſſions, and the forms and ſolemnities of repentance, but real and hearty ſorrow for ſin; that a Man's Conſcience be really troubled, and in great anguiſh for his ſin; and when this is done, all is well; from ſuch trouble of Conſcience they date their converſion, and this they are always reflecting upon as a ſecurity, not only againſt the ſins committed before it, but that from that time God ſees no more ſin in them; as if, like as it was at the Pool of *Bethesda*, when the Angel *had moved the waters, all that ſtept in were healed.* Theſe Men ordinarily pleaſe themſelves with melancholy complaints of themſelves, cry out of a naughty heart, a hard heart, *&c.* and think this will do their buſineſs, as if ſo ſoon as the Patient is grown ſenſible of his caſe he were cured, and to feel the ſmart were all one as to have the ſore healed.

Laſtly,

Laſtly, A fourth ſort go farther yet, and require not only contrition, but reſolution of obedience; but content themſelves, and incourage Men to a great degree of confidence, though this reſolution be never put in execution. Thus a great many Saints are Canonized from the Gallows, and the *Clinick* or Death-Bed repentance is greatly countenanced. Men commence Saints *per ſaltum*, as they ſay, as the *Romans* made Gentlemen; *Momento turbinis exit Marcus Dama*, in the turning of an hand a lewd and flagitious perſon ſtarts up a great Saint. The ground of this opinion is, they ſuppoſe that which is undoubtedly true, that God knows Men's hearts; but then they infer that which is very dangerous, that therefore ſo that be turned right, it is no matter with him whether there proceed any *fruits worthy of repentance, and amendment of life.*

To all theſe I might farther add, thoſe that reckon the change of opinion, being of an admired Sect, coming over with great zeal to a new party, a demure garb, an auſtere temper, or at moſt ſome partial reformation to be ſufficient ſigns of regeneration, which fancy agrees too well to the humour of a great part of Men of this age: but I ſhall not need to proceed farther in reckoning up theſe miſtakes, nor do I think it neceſſary to apply a particular confutation to doctrines ſo very abſurd at the firſt view: but I will now, as I promiſed, demonſtrate the neceſſity of the doctrine I have aſſerted, which will be an effectual detection of the fallacy of all theſe other now recited. And this I will do by theſe four Arguments.

§. II. Firſt, if God in the Holy Scripture doth require of thoſe that have lived wickedly, as the con-

condition of their abſolution and reconciliation to himſelf, that they be not only ſorry for their ſins, and reſolve upon a new courſe, but expreſly calls for actual performance of ſuch reſolutions and real reformation; then thoſe muſt be ſtrangely bold and preſumptuous Men that will conceive hopes of pardon upon any other terms. But that this which we aſſert, and nothing leſs, is the declared condition of mercy, theſe following Paſſages amongſt innumerable others do abundantly evince. The firſt I take notice of is that of the Prophet *Iſaiah*, Chap. 1. Verſ. 11, 13, &c. *To what purpoſe is the multitude of your ſacrifices unto me? ſaith the Lord: I am full of the burnt offerings of Rams, and the fat of fed Beaſts; and I delight not in the blood of Bullocks, or of Lambs, or of He Goats. Bring no more vain oblations, incenſe is abomination to me, the new Moons and Sabbaths, the calling of Aſſemblies I cannot away with, it is iniquity, even the ſolemn meeting. And when you ſpread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. Waſh you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, ceaſe to do evil, learn to do well, ſeek judgment, relieve the oppreſſed, judge the Fatherleſs, plead for the Widow. Come now and let us reaſon together, ſaith the Lord: though your ſins be as ſcarlet, they ſhall be as white as ſnow*, &c. Of like import is that of the Prophet *Ezekiel*, Chap. 18. Verſ. 21, 22, 28. *But if the wicked will turn from all his ſins that he hath committed, and keep all my ſtatutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he ſhall ſurely live, he ſhall not die. All the tranſgreſſions that he hath committed, they ſhall not be mentioned unto him.----Becauſe he conſidereth, and turneth away from all his tranſ-*

*tranſgreſſions that he hath committed, he ſhall ſurely live, he ſhall not die.* So alſo Micah 6. 6, 7, 8. *Wherewithal ſhall I come before the Lord, and bow my ſelf before the High God? ſhall I come before him with burnt offerings, with Calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleaſed with thouſands of Rams, or with ten thouſand rivers of Oil? ſhall I give my firſt-born for my trangreſſion, the fruit of my Body for the ſin of my Soul? He hath ſhewed thee, O man, what is good, and what doth the Lord require of thee; but to do juſtly and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?*

In all which places God puts a ſlight upon all the moſt ſolemn expreſſions of penitence, when they are disjoyned from actual amendment of life. And touching Sacrifice, it is very remarkable that though that was a rite of God's own allowance for the expiation of ſin, and had alſo conjoyned with it the guilty perſons confeſſion of his fault, and that particularly (as *Maimonides* aſſures us) and conſidering the uſual coſt of the oblation was a mulct upon the ſinner, and ſome kind of reparation to God, yet this is declared of no efficacy without reformation.

Thus it was in the Old Teſtament, and in the New the caſe is plainer if it be poſſible; for thus *John* the Baptiſt preaches, that they ſhould not think it ſufficient to ſubmit to the baptiſm of repentance: *But bring forth fruits worthy of repentance*, Matt. 3. 8. And ſuch is the diſcourſe of our Saviour himſelf, Matth. 7. 21. *Not every one that ſaith unto me, Lord, Lord, ſhall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that doth the will of my Father which is in Heaven. q. d.* It is not all the importunity of Prayers or Addreſſes, that will avail without obedience. So the Apoſtle S. *Paul*, 2 Tim. 2. 19. *The foundation of God ſtandeth ſure, having*

*having this ſeal, the Lord knoweth who are his, and let him that nameth the name of Chriſt depart from iniquity. q. d.* The Election of God ſhall not be fruſtrate, nor the ends of *Chriſt*'s death defeated; nevertheleſs let no Man pretend to be concerned in the one, nor intereſted in the other, but he that is really a good and holy Man. And (not to heap up Scriptures unneceſſarily in ſo plain a caſe) upon this account it is, that Religion is deſcribed by a *walk*, a *courſe*, a *warfare*, a *life*, &c. becauſe that which God requires indiſpenſibly of Men is not an agony or paſſion for their miſcarriages, or a reſolution of amendment, but an habit of vertuous converſation; and all this is graphically repreſented by our Saviour in a Parable not unlike this before us, Matt. 21. verſ. 28, 29, &c. *What think you? a certain man had two Sons: and he ſaid to the firſt, Son, go work to day in my Vineyard. He anſwered and ſaid, I will not: but afterwards he repented and went. And he came to the ſecond, and ſaid likewiſe. And he anſwered and ſaid, I go, Sir, but went not. Whether of them twain did the will of his Father*, &c. The caſe was this, the Scribes and Phariſees, and Rulers of the *Jews* made a great ſhew of Piety, they complemented God with Prayers and other Addreſſes, and ſeemed ready preſt for his ſervice; whereas the Publicans and Harlots had lived with as little pretence of piety as morality, yet theſe at laſt being convinced of their danger come to repentance, and really perform what the other did but promiſe. And this puts me in mind of a ſtory in *Plutarch* very applicable to the preſent purpoſe. It hapned that the Image of *Minerva* the great Goddeſs of *Athens* was to be new made; and in a caſe which they eſteemed of ſo great moment, all care was taken to employ the moſt accurate and able

Plutarch. *Reip. ger. præcept.*

able Workman; whereupon every Artiſt both deſirous of the honour and profit, by ſome means or other recommends himſelf to the employment; but amongſt the reſt, appears one, who in a long and eloquent oration, magnifies his own ability in that kind, and drew all Men's Eyes upon him, till at laſt another riſes up and uſes only this ſhort, but ſignificant ſaying, *Whatever that Man hath ſaid I will perform.* This Man no doubt was entertained for the employment; and moſt aſſuredly the Man who actually performs his vows, and doth what others talk of, or make pretences to, is the only perſon that finds acceptance with the Almighty. For,

Secondly, It would beget in the minds of Men very mean and unworthy notions of God as an eaſie Majeſty, ſhould he ſuffer himſelf to be put off with complemental addreſſes, or divert his juſt indignation without honourable ſatisfaction; and to think to prevail with him by coſtly Sacrifices and Oblations would ſpeak him a neceſſitous Deity, that could either be pleaſed with ſuch trifles, or were fond of ſuch empty things as Men dote upon: it would alſo take away all the veneration of his Laws, and diveſt him of that glorious Attribute of Juſtice, if he could be ſuppoſed to diſpenſe with obedience upon any of theſe conditions. To imagine that ſighs and tears, and melancholy reflexions upon our ſelves would propitiate him, charges him with ſeverity and cruelty, as if he took pleaſure in the calamities and ſufferings of his Creatures; it makes him appear like to the *Pagan* Idol *Baal*, whoſe Prieſts not only with vehement importunity called upon him from Morning till Noon, *O Baal hear us*, 1 *Kings* 18. but in a frantick mood leaped upon the altar, and cut themſelves with

Knive

Knives and Lancets till the bloud guſhed out, that by this means they might move his compaſſion towards them. And which is worſe yet, no Man that conſiders theſe things, can reaſonably doubt, but God may abate his Creatures theſe things, if he pleaſes; and then the conſequence is very ſad, for if he be ſuppoſed to require thoſe things, as the conditions of his favour, which he may abate, all Religion is made Arbitrary, and the moſt fundamental reaſon of obedience deſtroyed; and the horrible imputation laid upon God, that if he damn any, it is becauſe he rigidly inſiſts upon ſuch things as he might have indulged.

Now all theſe things being intolerable, it muſt needs be true, that the only way of propitiating the Divine Majeſty, is by being ſincerely good, by ingenuous compliance with his Laws, by actual reformation; for this renders him truly great, and juſt and good; this is a reaſonable ſervice worthy of his excellency, when all the powers of Man are made ſubject to him, and we love him with *all our might, and ſoul, and ſtrength.*

But if it be ſaid, all this may be done by the reſolution of the mind to amend, though no ſuch thing actually follow, becauſe God ſees things in their cauſes, and knowing the hearts of Men, needs not the fruits, ſince he fore-ſees it in the roots. To this I anſwer, that where it pleaſes God by cutting off the thread of men's lives to interrupt the proſecution of their intended reformation, there it is reaſonable to hope that he will accept the will for the deed; but where-ever he affords opportunity of executing Men's intentions, there at leaſt can be no juſt expectation that he ſhould admit of leſs than what is both ſo agreeable to his revealed will, and alſo ſo much neceſſary to the intereſt of

his glory, inasmuch as it is fit, that the divine sovereignty, as well as the justice and wisdom of his Laws (all which hath been violated by sin) should be vindicated and justified by the sinners retracting his own act, and doing contrary to that wherein he had offended, and that by *letting his good works shine before men, he may glorifie his heavenly Father*, as heretofore he hath dishonoured him by his neglects and disobedience. But,

Thirdly, If it were both consistent with the declaration of the divine will, and also with his glory and interest to admit of any thing less than actual reformation at the hands of the sinner; and could God be supposed inclinable to dispense with it, yet the very condition of Heaven, and the state and condition of the other world will necessarily require it. The Apostle tells us, *Hebr.* 6. 9. there are τὰ ἐχόμενα σωτηρίας. *i. e.* some things that carry such a relation to the other world, that a Man cannot be damned with them, nor saved without them. Or as the same Apostle saith elsewhere, *Col.* 1. 12. there are certain things that make Men ἱκανοὶ, *meet to be partakers of the inheritance with the saints in light*; and on the other hand, it is in the nature of other things to make Men *vessels of wrath*, and to *fit them for destruction*. If therefore we should suppose sin to do no wrong to God, yet it doth wrong to our own nature, unfitting us for our ends, and making us incapable of our happiness; and if a course of vertue be not profitable to God, nor can make him any amends, yet it amends us both in our faculties, and in our capacities. For certainly God doth not by a fatal sentence doom Men to the Pit of Hell, nor by his Almighty power precipitate them thither, until their own wickedness had prepared them and dispo-

sed

ſed them for that ſtate. In which ſenſe I ſee no reaſon (with the pardon of a late Learned Perſon) but to take that paſſage, *Acts* 1. 25. where it is ſaid of *Judas*, that *he went to his own place.* For Hell is the proper place of ſin, and ſin thruſts a Man down thither; or the Central Powers of thoſe infernal Regions, as it were, draw and ſuck in the ſinner. And therefore the very damned can never think hardly of God, as if he took pleaſure in their miſery, but muſt for ever curſe their own folly, which made it fit and neceſſary that God ſhould do what he doth.

The Apoſtle tells us, Rom. 14. 17. *The Kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteouſneſs, peace and joy in the Holy Ghoſt*: which ſaying is indeed to be underſtood of the ſtate of Chriſtianity; notwithſtanding, if we will conſider, it will appear to us that Heaven it ſelf as it ſignifies the ſtate of bleſſedneſs in the other World, conſiſts not ſo much in the external glory of a Palace, or any other circumſtances, either to accommodate the body, or to entertain the imagination, as in a ſtate of perfect purity, peace and love, clear knowledge of the mind, juſt order of all the powers, the light of Gods countenance, ready and chearful compliance with his will, comfortable reflexions upon our former carriage, bleſſed ſociety of Saints and Angels, and everlaſting life for the durable enjoyment of all theſe unſpeakably good things. And on the other ſide, Hell is not ſo dreadful for the horrid circumſtances of the place, (though that be ſad enough) as that there a Man is baniſhed from God, and all his powers in confuſion, he is filled with rage, horribly and perpetually laſhed by his own Conſcience, and ſcorned and tortured by infernal Furies, to whoſe company he is for ever condemned without hopes of recovery.

Now though it cannot be ſaid that every holy and vertuous Man muſt naturally and neceſſarily be intitled to the happineſs of Heaven, becauſe the glories of that ſtate are of Gods ſpecial proviſion, and therefore muſt be at his diſpoſal; and beſides, there is no Man whoſe vertue hath been ſuch as to render him capable thereof, without the interpoſition of the divine mercy in *Jeſus Chriſt:* Yet it is evident, that there is a great ſuitableneſs between the temper of a brave Man, and the ſtate of Heaven; a juſt, wiſe, chaſte, temperate and peaceable perſon, is prepared and diſpoſed as a Candidate for that ſtate; and on the contrary, a debaucht and vicious Man is utterly unfit for it, and carries the very ingredients of Hell about him.

Take for example a cruel, malicious, and miſchievous Man, whoſe ſoul is in his ſpleen, and who continually ſacrifices to thoſe accurſed Fiends, rancour and revenge; let any Man be judge, whether ſuch a Man can be a fit inhabitant of thoſe peaceful Regions above, and that amicable ſociety of Saints and Angels? or what can be more natural to him, and proper for him, than the company of Devils which he ſo exactly reſembles? or take a turbulent and ſeditious perſon, a *Boutefeau*, whoſe only pleaſure hath been to diſturb the world, that never diſcerned the beauty of order, nor taſted the ſweets of peace, nor framed himſelf to duty and obedience; what ſhould ſuch a Man do in Heaven where all is order and harmony? he is only fit for the infernal hurry, and we may very aptly apply the ſtately expreſſion of the Prophet to his caſe. Iſa. 14. 9. *Hell from beneath is moved for thee, to meet thee at thy coming; it ſtirreth up the dead for thee: and art thou become like unto us*, &c. Once more, take a Man wholly addicted to ſenſuality, and

and the beaſtly pleaſures of the body, to eat and drink, and live voluptuouſly, what ſhould this Man do in Heaven? What is there for him, where there is no uſe of the belly; and where the pleaſures are ſublime and intellectual? what delights can the preſence of an holy Majeſty, a bleſſed *Jeſus*, and the harmony of an heavenly Quire, miniſter to him that hath never reliſhed other muſick than the wild roarings of a debauch, or the ſoft charms of ſenſuality? He that is capable of that bleſſed ſtate, and of thoſe entertainments, muſt be ſuch an one as hath been habituate to ſobriety and chaſtity, that hath learned to deny and caſtigate the importunities of his Senſes, that hath laboured to live out of the body whilſt he was in it. Now this is not to be performed by a ſudden pang of devotion, nor by a meer reſolution or intention of becoming vertuous, (howſoever ſerious that may be) but by long exerciſe, ſerious indeavour, a habit and a new nature.

4. But in the fourth and laſt place, if we could ſuppoſe, that neither the nature and ſtate of the world to come, did neceſſarily require ſuch habitual vertue, as we have ſhewed it doth; nor that God had reſolved to inſiſt upon the actual performance of our reſolutions: I ſay, if God would pardon a Man upon the meer acknowledgment of his offence, and ſorrow for it, yet would not the penitent pardon himſelf in this caſe: I mean, it would be impoſſible for him to find any quiet in his boſom, till he had in ſome meaſure effaced the memory of his former wickedneſs by a courſe of generous vertue. For when once a Man's Eyes are open to ſee his ſhameful folly, and his heart made ſo ſenſible as to relent at his miſ-doing, he will have ſuch an abhorrence of himſelf for his own unreaſonableneſs,

ſonableneſs, that he will be ſo far from looking up to God with comfort, or towards men with confidence; that he will not be able to endure his own face, until he have by a ſingular diligence indeavoured to reſcind his own act, and in ſome meaſure repaired the injuries his lewd extravagancies have made him guilty of. Accordingly S. *Paul*, as we have noted before, ſeems to carry about him a bleeding ſenſe of his former miſcarriages, but 1 *Cor.* 15. 10. he had this to ſupport him, that although he was as *one born out of due time*, coming late into *Chriſt*'s ſervice; yet from that time he *laboured more abundantly* than thoſe that came earlier into the Vineyard.

It is a moſt impertinent inquiry which ſome melancholy perſons have been taught to make; have I been humbled enough for ſin? is the meaſure of my ſorrow ſufficient for my guilt? have I lain long enough under the terrours of the Law, and the ſpirit of bondage? for God requires not ſorrow for it ſelf, but for its end; and it is no ſatisfaction to him that his Creatures lie under affrightful apprehenſions; beſides, our own Conſciences will tell us, we may then dry our Eyes and be comfortable when the cauſe is taken away, and not before; for then is it *Godly ſorrow when it bringeth forth repentance not to be repented of*, 2 Cor. 7. 10.

And herein lies the great uncomfortableneſs of a death-bed repentance, for, (beſides the horrible madneſs of truſting the iſſues of eternity, upon extempore preparations) if it ſhould pleaſe God to give a Man both the grace and the opportunity, then at laſt ſeriouſly to bethink himſelf, to feel remorſe for his ſins, to make reſolutions, and to renew his baptiſmal Covenant; yet then he can give

no

no proof to himſelf of his own ſincerity, becauſe he cannot repair God's honour, he can make no conqueſt over Satan, he can leave no example to the world, he cannot by habit and exerciſe make the ways of God become eaſie and natural to himſelf, he cannot be ſaid to have lived the life of the righteous, and therefore cannot comfortably conclude that he ſhall die the death of ſuch.

As for the penitent Thief in the Goſpel, that accompanied our Saviour in his ſufferings upon the Croſs, to whom our Saviour pronounced, *that he ſhould that day be with him in paradiſe*; his caſe was peculiar, probably he had lived in great darkneſs and ignorance, and never had the means of grace till now; but however it was not unagreeable to the divine wiſdom and goodneſs to do ſomething extraordinary at that great time, and to ſignalize the efficacy of our Saviour's Mediatorſhip by ſome remarkable inſtance at ſuch a time, when the dignity and glory of his perſon was moſt clouded and obſcured; and as there never was nor will be ſuch another occaſion as this, ſo it is great and deſperate folly for any man to truſt to ſuch an experiment. And whereas in the parable, *Matth.* 20. *verſ.* 12. thoſe Labourers that came into the Vineyard at the eleventh hour are rewarded equally with *thoſe that had born the burthen and heat of the day*; It is in the firſt place to be obſerved, that though they came late, yet not ſo late, but that they did really work in the Vineyard; and then beſides, here is nothing contrary to what we are preſſing, for we are far from intention of diſcouraging any to return at laſt, or from limiting the mercies of God, who is able to fore-ſee what a late Convert would have done if he had opportunity, and may accordingly extend mercy to him.

All therefore which I ſay, is, that this is a moſt uncomfortable ſtate, when a Man's Conſcience cannot give ſecurity for him; nor is there any thing that affords him poſitive grounds of hope, having not performed the conditions of the New Covenant, only he hath a general refuge in the merits of *Chriſt* and in God's mercy.

Wherefore there is all the reaſon, and all the wiſdom in the world, that a Man ſhould not truſt to prefaces and *præludia*, beginnings and firſt eſſays of repentance, but let it have its perfect work; that with the Prodigal Son, he not only ſit down and bewail his miſery, or to take up reſolutions of returning to his Father: but that he forthwith ſet about it and effect it; *So he aroſe and came to his Father*. What entertainment he meets with from his Father upon ſo doing, I am now to ſhew in the third and laſt Part of this Parable.

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THE

# THE *Penitent Pardoned:* OR, A DISCOURSE OF THE NATURE of SIN, AND THE EFFICACY of REPENTANCE, Under the Parable *of the* Prodigal Son.

## PART III.

The Prodigal received and reconciled, or God's gracious reception of a Penitent Sinner.

*S.* Luke 15. Verſe 22, 23, 24.

*But the Father ſaid to his ſervants, Bring forth the beſt robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and ſhoes on his feet.*

*And*

*And bring hither the fatted Calf, and kill it, and let us eat, and be merry.*

*For this my Son was dead, and is alive again; was loſt, and is found,* &c.

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## CHAP. I.

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§. VII. *Practical reflexions upon Juſtification.*

§. I. It

§. I. IT is a very lively and pathetick ſtory which *Moſes* gives us concerning *Jacob* and his Sons, eſpecially his beloved Son *Joſeph*, to this effect. The brethren of *Joſeph* envying him that great ſhare he had in his Father's affections, reſolve ſome way or other to diſpatch him out of the way; but that they might not imbrue their hands in his bloud, they conclude to ſell him a ſlave to the *Midianites*, (that happened at that time to come in the way) and to hide their own fault from their Father, they kill a Kid, and dip *Joſeph*'s Coat in the bloud, and telling a demure ſtory to the old Man, impoſe upon his belief that ſome wild Beaſt had devoured his Son. Which when the good Man was poſſeſt of, he moſt tenderly reſents the affliction, rents his Cloaths, puts Sackcloth upon his Loins, and mourned many days. Whereupon his Sons and Daughters, and even thoſe eſpecially that had raiſed the tragedy, perſonate ſo well as to take upon them to be his comforters; but the wound was too deep to be eaſily cured, for he refuſes conſolation: *No* (ſaith he) *I will go down to the grave to my Son mourning*: my grief ſhall only wear away with my life, and only the land of oblivion ſhall make me forget *Joſeph*. At laſt, after a long and ſad time of lamentation, there comes the ſurprizing news to the good Man, *Joſeph thy Son is yet alive, and Ruler of all the land of Ægypt*. The aged Father faints at the tidings, the news was too good to be true; the apprehenſion of his Son's death had ſeized him ſo long, that he could not believe any thing to the contrary now; and by the report of his life his wounds bleed afreſh, and the grief for the loſs of him was ſo renewed, that the good Man ſinks into a *Deliquium*. Gen. *Chap.* 37. continued to *Chap.* 45.

But

But when they had opportunity to report the whole buſineſs, to relate the meſſage was brought from *Joſeph*, and eſpecially came to real proof, ſhewing him the Waggons which his Son had ſent to bring him down into *Ægypt*, *Then* (ſaith the Text) *the Spirit of their Father revived*; and he is as ready to be tranſported with an ecſtaſy of joy now, as to be overwhelmed with ſadneſs before; but he recovers himſelf, *And Iſrael ſaid, It is enough, Joſeph my Son is yet alive, I will go down and ſee him before I die.*

The ſtory, beſides the unqueſtionable authority of ſacred record, carries the natural marks of truth upon it; all things being repreſented ſo done, as they muſt needs be done upon ſuppoſition of the fact. And for the lively ſtrokes of paſſion in it, I know not whether any thing in all Hiſtory be able to match it, grief and joy, great as their ſeveral cauſes, taking place ſucceſſively, vying with, and ſetting off each other.

Now although the buſineſs which we have at preſent before us be only a Parable, yet it is not much unlike that Hiſtory; for here we find a beloved Son at different times under the extremities of good and evil; one while as miſerable as folly and misfortune can make him, another while recovering himſelf and his ſtation again, and in all this diverſity of fortune, a good Father paſſionately concerned with him, grieving and rejoycing reſpectively, as the condition of his Son gave him occaſion, and all expreſt with equal life, as in the former Hiſtory; as if it were not a repreſentation of what might be done, but what was really matter of fact.

We

We have hitherto ſeen the tragical part only, the Son's folly and miſery, and the Father's grief; the Son running on from one intemperance to another till his Father deſpaired of him, and he found himſelf ruined; but then by a great providence he comes to himſelf and returns, but (as we ſay) by weeping croſs.

But now the ſcene is changed; the Son is recovered and the Father revived, and all is joy and gladneſs. Here the good Shepherd bringeth his loſt ſheep home on his ſhoulders rejoycing; here we ſee the good *Samaritan* pouring in Wine and Oyl, and binding up the wounds of him that was miſerably wounded, and in a deplorable condition. In ſhort, here we have a kind Father owning, receiving and endowing his returning Son; and here we have God Almighty the Father of Spirits, pardoning and bleſſing penitent Sinners.

§. II. But to come to particulars, whether we attend to the literal or the miſtycal ſenſe of the Parable; in this laſt part of it we ſhall eaſily obſerve theſe four remarkable paſſages.

1. *The paſſionate interview, the benign aſpect and kind greeting the Father affords his Son upon his firſt appearance in his way homewards.*

2. *The kind and preſent ſupply of the Son's wants, or the ornaments which the Father beſtows upon him being now returned.*

3. *The ſplendid reception and entertainment he makes for him.*

4. *And fourthly and laſtly, his apology for ſo doing.*

I be-

I begin with the first, *(viz.)* the passionate greeting at the first interview expressed thus, vers. 20, 21, 22. *But when he was yet a great way off, his Father saw him, and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. And the Son said to his Father, Father, I have sinned,* &c.

The Son relents, and the Father melts into compassion; the Son is ashamed, and the Father's bowels yern towards him; the affections of a Father prevent the Son's humiliation and acknowledgements, and yet the Father's kindness will not discharge or supersede the Son's duty: there is a noble contention between them; the one would demonstrate more love, and the other strives to equal that with ingenuity. It is hard to observe order in passion; however, in the Father's carriage we take notice of these four steps.

First, He takes knowledge of his Son at a distance, *whilst he was yet a great way off*; though probably his former vices had disfigured him, and his poverty disguised him, long absence might have estranged him, and age had somewhat altered him; yet paternal affection is quick and sagacious, he discovered and distinguished him notwithstanding.

Secondly, His sight affects his heart, when he saw him, ἐσπλαγχνίσθη, *he had compassion*, his bowels yerned towards him: far sooner is the heart of a Father dissolved into kindness, than that of a Son into obedience; a great deal of consideration and resolution at last brings the Son to recover his sense of duty, but the Father takes fire presently, and the flame is not to be concealed. For,

Thirdly, The greatness of his passion prompts him beyond the gravity of his years, the dignity of his relation, and above the remembrance of his just offence; for *he ran to meet his Son.*

And

And then laſtly, He indulges his affections, or cannot command them; *he falls on his neck and kiſſes him*; he forgets all former undutifulneſs and provocation, he ſtands not rigidly expoſtulating the matter, nor ſcrupulouſly weighing formalities, but makes the fulleſt expreſſions of joy and endearment.

Now in a due proportion to all theſe particulars (making only a juſt allowance for the Majeſty of God) is the condeſcenſion of our Heavenly Father towards returning Sinners, as I will ſhew by drawing the parallel in all the aforeſaid particulars ſomething more at large.

Firſt, As an Earthly Parent that has loſt a Son, carries the image of him in his thoughts, and never ſo loſes the remembrance of him, but that upon every the leaſt occaſion he occurs to his mind, and therefore he will be quick in apprehending the firſt approaches of him, if he happen to return: ſo God our Heavenly Father hath ſo tender a love to Men, and ſuch a concern for their good and happineſs, that he takes notice of their firſt motions towards himſelf; he diſcerns the firſt reaſonings, the relentings, the agonies of mind, the firſt dawnings towards a reſolution of returning.

We ſee not the Corn grow, only we diſcover when it is grown; nor do we diſcern how our own members are faſhioned in the womb; but the curious Eye of God obſerves the firſt lines and traces of nature, the firſt eſſays and palpitations of life, upon which account the Pſalmiſt admires the divine Providence, Pſal. 139. 14, 15, 16. *I will praiſe thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: ---My ſubſtance was not hid from thee when I was made in ſecret, and curiouſly wrought in the lower parts of the earth. Thine eyes did ſee my ſubſtance being*

*being yet imperfect, and in thy book all my members were written, which in process of time were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.* And much more doth he observe the most weak and imperfect essays of the new birth, or as the Apostle expresses it, when *Christ* is beginning *to be formed in Men. I saw thee* (saith our Saviour to *Nathanael*) S. John 1. 48. *when thou wast under the fig-tree*; when thou wast reasoning about me whether I was the *Messias* or not. I was privy to that conflict of thy thoughts, between the report of the miracles wrought by me, and the prejudicate opinion concerning the supposed place of my nativity; I was not so much offended with thy objections, as pleased with thy sincerity, in that thou didst diligently inquire, honestly debate, and proceed to resolution upon rational satisfaction.

Most apposite to this purpose is that passage of the Prophet *Jeremiah*, Chap. 31. vers. 18, 19, 20. *I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus: Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: Turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth.* And after he had thus passionately described the first kindlings of repentance in the hearts of the people of *Israel*, he then introduces God, taking notice and expressing his compassions in the next words. *Is Ephraim my dear Son? is he a pleasant Child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still, therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord.* By all which we see that God despiseth not the day of small things.

Now

Now the conſideration of this affords mighty incouragement to Sinners to begin their motion to God-ward; who would not put himſelf upon the way, when the firſt attempt of returning ſhall be taken notice of? If a man do but conſider, if he do but pray, if but breath and pant after God, there is a gracious Eye upon him, it is not altogether loſt labour; Nay, (ſaith our Saviour) *A cup of cold water given to a diſciple in the name of a diſciple, ſhall not loſe its reward.* And if ſuch mean performances paſs not unrewarded, much leſs doth any thing of good eſcape God's notice and obſervation.

And upon the ſame conſideration there is great reaſon of caution, and that Men take heed of diſcouraging any (though never ſo ſmall) hopes of good, and buddings of reformation in others; for ſeeing God takes notice of beginnings, he muſt needs be offended with thoſe that obſtruct them, and will be ſure ſeverely to reſent it. Let therefore thoſe that ſcoff at prayer and devotion as preciſeneſs, at ſeriouſneſs and ſelf-reflection, as melancholy degeneracy of ſpirit, that either preſs Men forward into the ſame exceſs of riot with themſelves, or labour to divert or ſtifle all workings of Conſcience by the means of ſenſual entertainments, or treat thoſe with contumely, who boggle at their extravagancies, and begin to take up and reform: let all ſuch, I ſay, conſider well what to do, when God's Eye is upon ſuch beginnings of good, leſt they be found fighters againſt God. And let all that have any ſenſe of goodneſs themſelves, or but ſo much as a reverence of God's All-ſeeing Eye, think it becomes them to incourage ſuch beginnings, to endeavour to kindle ſuch ſparks, and blow them up into a flame of love to God and goodneſs; to

which purpoſe I take liberty to apply a paſſage of the Prophet *Iſaiah*, Chap. 65. verſ. 8. *Thus ſaith the Lord, as the new wine is found in the cluſter, and one ſaith, Deſtroy it not, for there is a bleſſing in it. q. d.* The wiſe Maſter of the Vineyard (eſpecially in an unfruitful time) takes ſpecial notice of thoſe few Grapes in a cluſter that have good juice in them and will neither permit them to be careleſly cruſhed with the hand, nor caſt away amongſt refuſe. So will the God of *Iſrael* do by his Vineyard the Houſe of *Iſrael*; he will take notice of the few that are good in the midſt of a bad generation, and not deſtroy all together: And in-like manner, he will not deſpiſe the firſt Eſſays of emergency from former vice and wickedneſs. But thus I am led to the ſecond parallel.

§. III. 2. The Father as ſoon as he ſaw his Son, had compaſſion; ſo hath God to Mankind, eſpecially when he ſees them on their way homeward. He had always good will towards them as they were his Creatures, made in his own Image, deſigned for his Service, and for the enjoyment of himſelf; and upon all theſe accounts hath a propenſion to do them good. But ſo long as any Man continues in a courſe of rebellion againſt him, all the Iſſues and expreſſions of this good will are obſtructed; which nevertheleſs as ſoon as ever he begins to relent and come to himſelf, break out again and diſcover themſelves. For (as the Pſalmiſt tells us,) *Like as a Father pitieth his Children, ſo the Lord pitieth them that Fear him*, Pſal. 103. 13.

Not that we are to imagine the Divine Majeſty to be ſubject to the weakneſs of humane paſſion in a ſtrict and proper ſenſe, ſo as to feel any pain or trouble upon the account of his concern for Mankind,

kind, for that the ſpirituality of his nature, the perfection of his underſtanding and his ſelf-ſufficiency, will by no means admit of. But he is pleaſed in Holy Scripture to repreſent himſelf after that manner, to the intent that we may be incouraged to hope and to indeavour, ſince we are aſſured that he is not a meer ſpectator of the conflicts and Agonies of a Penitent, but hath a real inclination to do him good, and would by no means have him periſh. To this purpoſe, Ezek. 33. 11. he ſwears, *As I live, ſaith the Lord God, I have no pleaſure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways, for why will ye die, O houſe of Iſrael?* What greater paſſion can any Father expreſs towards his beloved Son, than God here condeſcends to? and what greater aſſurance can God give of his earneſtneſs and reality, than that of an Oath by himſelf?

Whilſt men are at the worſt, the Divine goodneſs finds out ſome Arguments of Pity, for he conſiders he made them fallible Creatures, that he gave them not the bright and piercing intellects of Angels, he joyned matter and ſpirit together in their compoſition, by means whereof there is a continual conteſt between ſenſe and reaſon, a conſtant diſpute betwixt *bonum utile*, and *jucundum*; that their tranſgreſſion is not like that of Devils, who ſinned *proprio motu, without a tempter*; he knows the power of example, the prejudices of education, the long follies of Child-hood; and therefore, as I have ſhewed before, is not implacable towards Mankind, whilſt the ſtate of life and this world laſts. But when he takes notice that any Man begins to recollect himſelf, to emerge out of his folly, to remember his Father's houſe, and

to thirſt after external life; he is infinitely pleaſed with it, and cheriſhes ſuch bloſſoms.

Thus it was propheſied of the *Meſſias*, and interpreted and applied to our Saviour by the Evangeliſt, Matth. 12. 20. *A bruiſed reed ſhall he not break, and ſmoaking flax ſhall he not quench, until he ſend forth judgment unto victory, i. e.* He will neither precipitate thoſe upon utter ruine who are very near it, and have caſt themſelves upon the brink of danger, ſo long as there is hopes remaining of their recovery; nor much leſs will he deſpiſe and extinguiſh the leaſt ſparks and beginnings of good, but incourage and promote them.

Mark. 10. 21. And this we obſerve to be verified in the young man in the Goſpel, of whom we have taken notice before; he made ſome Conſcience of his ways, and enquired after eternal life, and was willing to do ſomething to attain it; wherefore though he was far from being generouſly good, nevertheleſs the Text tells us, *Jeſus looked upon him, and loved him.*

In ſhort therefore, whatſoever God's proceedings ſhall be with impenitent and incurable ſinners in the other world, who have withſtood the whole day of grace, and abuſed all his patience and kindneſs? I ſay, whatever ſeverity his wiſdom and juſtice may then require, when men have *treaſured up wrath againſt the day of wrath*, and fitted themſelves for deſtruction: yet certainly in this life, and whilſt there is any hope, God is compaſſionate towards them; he pities thoſe he cannot love, and loves thoſe that pity themſelves; and delights in thoſe that love him. But this pity of the Almighty, which yet is one of the loweſt inſtances of his benignity, conſiſts not as it doth often in men, in a ſoft Sympathy, with the miſerable, or ineffective wiſhes

wiſhes of their good; but is like himſelf, great and powerful in its effects. For in the next place,

§. IV. 3. As the Father not only admits his Son when he returns to him, *but runs to meet him*; ſo doth the Almighty help and bring on ſinners in their way to himſelf. S. *Jerom* I confeſs underſtands this paſſage (in the myſtical ſenſe) to point at the Incarnation of our Saviour, wherein God may very properly be ſaid to meet man, taking our humane nature that he might make us partakers of his Divine. But I rather apply it to the efficacious aſſiſtance which God gives by his Grace to all beginnings of good in men. *Miraris homines ad Deos ire* (ſaith *Seneca*) *Deus ad homines venit, imò (quod propiùs eſt) in homines venit, nulla ſine Deo mens bona eſt.* And a little before he had ſaid, *Non ſunt dii faſtidioſi, non invidi, admittunt, & aſcendentibus manus porrigunt.* Which words of his may thus be rendred in a Scripture Phraſe. *God though he be the high and lofty one, inhabiting eternity, yet is not ſtately and diſdainful; yet neither envies nor grudges men's happineſs; and though he dwell in the high and holy place, yet to this man will he look that is of a broken and contrite ſpirit: and he will be ſo far from repulſing his endeavours of aſcending up to him, that he reaches out a hand of mercy to pull him up to himſelf. Wonder not then that men attain to God, when he vouchſafes to come down to them, nay, to come in to them; for never was any vertuous mind without his help.* Senec. Ep. 73.

To that purpoſe ſpeaks the excellent Moraliſt, but the holy Scripture moſt expreſly, Phil. 2. 12. *It is God that worketh both to will and to do*: and Jo. 6. 44. *No man cometh unto me, except my Father which hath ſent me, draw him.* And this temper is that which the Prophet magnificently deſ-

ſcribes the *Meſſias* by, Iſai. 40. 11. *He ſhall feed his flock like a ſhepherd, he ſhall gather the Lambs with his arms and carry them in his boſom, and ſhall gently lead thoſe that are with young:* And thus alſo the Prophet *Hoſea* ſets forth God's dealing with his people *Iſrael*, *Hoſea* 11. 3. *I taught Ephraim to go, taking them by their arms: I drew them with the Cords of a man, with the bands of love.* In which paſſages, though God by the Prophets deſcribe the way of his Providence with literal *Iſrael*, the *Jewiſh* Nation, yet as that People was a type of the ſpiritual *Iſrael*, ſo did God's methods with them reſemble the gracious condeſcenſion he uſes towards the Souls of men in their converſion to himſelf.

Euſeb. *Eccleſ. Hiſt. li.* 3. *cap.* 17.

I cannot upon this occaſion omit a moſt affecting and remarkable ſtory which *Euſebius* reports upon the credit both of S. *Irenæus*, and *Clemens Alexandrinus* to this effect. S. *John* the Apoſtle in his viſitation of the Churches near about *Epheſus*, happens there to fix his Eyes upon a certain young man, who he conjectured (from the comelineſs of his ſhape, vigorous chearfulneſs of his Eyes, and other indications of a generous ſpirit) might become an eminent and uſeful perſon, if effectual care was taken of his education. He therefore calls to the Biſhop of the place, and ſolemnly conjures him in the preſence of *Chriſt* and his Holy Church, to ſpare no pains or care in cultivating the mind and manners of the young man. The Biſhop undertakes it, and accordingly takes him into his own Houſe, uſes him as his own Son, inſtructs him, baptizes, and at length confirms him in the Chriſtian Faith: which having done, he thinks now he might be a little more ſecure of him, and truſt him to his own conduct. But he had no ſooner done ſo, but certain looſe young men preſently inſinuate them-

themſelves into his acquaintance, and firſt debauch him with light careſſes, and jovial aſſignations; and then (as it often happens) to maintain thoſe exceſſes, they draw him into a confederacy of robbery: and in that flagitious ſociety, this young man quickly becomes ſo great a proficient, as to be Captain and Leader of the Fraternity. At this ſeaſon (as God would have it) the Apoſtle returns again into thoſe parts, and preſently requires an account from the Biſhop, of the young man committed to his truſt; the good old man with ſorrow in his heart, and tears in his Eyes, replies, Alas he is dead! dead, I ſay, to God and all goodneſs; he is become a common Thief and Cut-throat, hath deſerted the Church where I trained him up, and now keeps his ſtation in the Mountains hard by, from whence he makes his frequent ſallies to commit all kind of Villany. The Apoſtle (aged as he was) conſiders not his own infirmity, but the recovery of the young man; and therefore calling for an Horſe and a Guide, preſently iſſues forth into the Mountains where he had been told his haunts were. There he no ſooner arrives, but he's arreſted by the Centinel Theif: whereat he betraying no fear or ſurpriſal, as having in part attained what he ſought, Shew me, (ſaith he) your Captain. The Captain hearing this, and wondring what ſhould be the errand, preſents himſelf armed to receive him, till he ſoon perceived who it was; but then, ſeized with ſhame he makes from him with all the ſpeed he could. The Apoſtle forgetting his age and gravity, follows him with all his might, crying out, "My Son, my Son, doſt thou fly thy "Father? thy aged unarmed Father? Fear me "not, I come not armed to deſtroy thee, but de-"ſirous to ſave thee; I'll pray for thee, I'll inter-

" cede with *Chriſt Jeſus* on thy behalf: I am rea-
" dy to lay down my life to ſave thy Soul. The revolted youth hearing this, makes a ſtand, and then with Eyes caſt down, and Weapons laid aſide, begins to tremble, and at laſt weeping bitterly, is in the Words of the Hiſtorian, Re-baptized in his own tears. Then S. *John* embracing him, prays for him, faſts with him, inſtructs him, and leaves him not till he had not only reſtored him to the ſociety of the Church, but ſettled him in the publick Miniſtry thereof.

The Story is very admirable in all the parts of it, as wherein, amongſt other things, we may obſerve in the firſt place, how quickly bad company inſinuates its contagion, and corrupts youthful minds; and that neither fine Parts, nor the beſt Education, are ſufficient ſecurity for a vertuous courſe, unleſs *Apollos* water, as well as *Paul* plant, and God alſo give the increaſe.

Again, it is worth obſerving how eaſie and ſudden the tranſition is from a luxurious to a lawleſs life. This young man began his risk in riot, and ends it in robbery. Although this be no ſtrange thing, for beſides that intemperance makes men bold and raſh, and fit for any deſperate enterprize, they that are come to that, that they care not what they ſpend, are uſually forced not to regard how they get it. We note alſo from this ſtory, that great Wits, and curious tempers are like Razor-mettle quickly turned, and if they miſcarry, they become the moſt notorious Debauchees; but if they be well ſet, and hold right, become moſt eminently uſeful. Moreover, we may here alſo take notice how a ſenſe of guilt and diſ-ingenuity baffles a Man's ſpirit, dejects his courage, diſarms and ſubdues him; whereas on the other ſide, conſcience of ſincerity and

and good deſigns, ſpirits and actuates a man above his age, temper and common capacity. But that which I principally remark in the ſtory, is, the paternal affection in the aged Apoſtle towards this diſſolute and loſt young man; how freſh the concern for him was in his Thoughts, when he came into thoſe parts again where he left him? with what ſtrictneſs he requires the *depoſitum* of the Biſhop, how he forgets himſelf to recover him; what charms there were in the countenance, voice, motion, of the aged Father; how ſtrange a thing it was to ſee a young *Hector*, running away from an old Apoſtle; an armed Captain not daring to ſtand before unarmed and infirm old age: to obſerve the ſpirit, the paſſion, the flaming love of a good man to the Soul of a deſperate ſinner; and in all this, to ſee a lively reſemblance of God's Goodneſs to men. For God doth not only (as I have ſaid before) receive men upon their return, but moves towards them, invites, nay, draws them to himſelf. He is ſo far from poſitively hardening ſinners, that he takes off their hardneſs; he allures them by his promiſes, prevents them by his grace, way-lays them by his providence, calls upon them by his word, melts them by his kindneſs, works upon them by his Spirit; and this Spirit takes all advantageous ſeaſons, watches the *mollia tempora fandi*, ſuggeſts thoughts to their minds, holds their minds cloſe and intent, gives them a proſpect of the other world; and by ſeveral other ways (without violence to their faculties) helps forward their return to God.

§. V. 4. Laſtly, As the Earthly Father for joy of his Sons return, forgets all his anger, and the cauſes of it; paſſes by his ingratitude and diſſolution of

of manners, and treats him with infinite demonſtrations of kindneſs, *falling on his neck and kiſſing him:* So doth our Heavenly Father *caſt all the iniquities of the penitent behind his back, blots them out of his book*; makes no ſevere reflections, no bitter expoſtulations, no upbraidings, but paſſes an act of perfect *amneſty* and oblivion. *Juſtin Martyr* in his Work againſt *Trypho*, brings in our Saviour, ſaying, Ἐν οἷς ἂν ὑμᾶς καταλάβω, ἐν τούτοις καὶ κρινῶ. The Words are no where to be found in the Goſpel, but the ſenſe is, *That God takes men as they are, and conſiders not how evil they have been, ſo that now they become ſincerely good.* This the prophet *Ezekiel* frequently proclaims on the behalf of God, *Chap.* 18. eſpecially *verſ.* 22. *All his ſin that he hath committed ſhall not be once mentioned againſt him*; *but in his righteouſneſs that he hath done, he ſhall live.* For as if men apoſtatize from hopeful and vertuous beginnings, it ſhall not at all avail them that they ſet out well, *and began in the Spirit*, when as *they end in the Fleſh*, (upon which account it is a very vain thing for them to go about to comfort themſelves againſt their preſentlooſeneſs, by remembring the time of their converſion, and the great paſſion they have ſome time had for Religion, but which now they have apoſtatized from, *having loſt their* Rev. 2. 4. *firſt love*) ſo on the contrary, he that was a ſinner, but now is not; *i. e.* is now ſincerely returned from his licentiouſneſs to his duty, ſhall never have his former diſobedience imputed to him by God.

Philo *lib. de* Abrahamo. This truth *Philo* repreſents handſomely in his Allegorical way; when gloſſing upon what the Scripture ſaith of *Enoch*, *After his Tranſlation he was not found, becauſe God had tranſlated him*; he paraphraſes on this manner: *God* (ſaith he) *having changed*

*changed him from an evil to a vertuous man, the traces of his former wickedneſs were no more to be found, than if no ſuch thing had ever been committed.*

But this gracious procedure of God with penitent ſinners deſerves to be more fully and particularly unfolded; and if we diligently conſider what the Scripture aſſures us of the greatneſs of God's pardoning mercy, we ſhall obſerve theſe three remarkable circumſtances all pregnant of unſpeakable conſolation.

1. *He pardons great and many ſins, not only lighter provocations.*
2. *He forgives repeated follies, and relaſped ſinners.*
3. *His pardon is full and abſolute.*

1. Firſt, amongſt Men there are ſome ſins that are ſcarcely (if at all) thought to be pardonable, as where there is malice and treachery involved in the fact, or where there is contumely added to the injury. And ſometimes the greatneſs of the perſon injured ſo inhances the offence; as that it is not thought fit to pardon; as for inſtance, in Treaſon againſt the Supream Power. But moſt certainly there are all theſe, and many more aggravations in moſt voluntary ſins committed againſt God, and yet he pardons: Exod. 34. 7. *He pardons iniquity, tranſgreſſion and ſin, i. e.* ſin of all kinds and degrees whatſoever, excepting only the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt; which our Saviour hath told us *ſhall never be forgiven.* And that ſin it ſelf (whatſoever it conſiſts in) is only upon this account unpardonable, becauſe it hath a finally impenitent temper joined with it; otherwiſe were it poſſible that ſuch a ſinner ſhould repent, there would be no doubt of

of his pardon; but bating that peculiar caſe, there is no ſin but God hath pardoned and will pardon.

I will not take upon me to ſay which were the greateſt ſins that ever were committed by Mankind; but I will inſtance in two that muſt needs be acknowledged to have been very great, which yet have obtained pardon; and they are the ſin of our firſt Parents, and the ſin of the *Jews* in Crucifying our Saviour.

In the former of theſe there was (1) the breach of a known Law, and (2) that ſo newly given, as that it could not be forgotten, (3) and it was alſo an eaſie and reaſonable Law: God having allowed them all the Trees in the Garden, and laid an interdict only upon that one; and it was no hard matter to have denied themſelves that for God's ſake, eſpecially conſidering (4) they came newly out of his hands, and ſaw ſo freſhly the diſplay of his power and wiſdom in the creation of the World, (5) and had ſo many and great inſtances of his goodneſs towards themſelves: beſides, (6) they had as yet no vitiated faculties, (7) nor ſo much as one example of ſin before them, but that of the Devils, which they had ſeen to be moſt ſeverely vindicated. It was a hard thing to be firſt in the tranſgreſſion, and a bold thing to venture to provoke God, and to be the firſt inſtance of ſin to all poſterity: (8) they had the concern of all Mankind upon them, as who (they knew) muſt ſtand or fall with them; (9) and having frequent tokens of God's preſence with them, to ſin under his Eye, (10.) and to hearken to the ſuggeſtions of a vile Beaſt, the Serpent, againſt God, was prodigiouſly ſtrange, and yet they did it; and God was pleaſed to pardon them.

In

In the latter of the inſtances, namely, the *Jews* Crucifying our Saviour; beſides (1.) the greatneſs of the Perſon againſt whom they ſinned, putting to death *the Lord of life and glory*, there was (2.) deſigned malice, (3.) perjury and ſubornation; (4.) contumely towards an holy Perſon, (5.) ingratitude towards one that had done them all the good they were capable of; there (6.) was contradiction to the plaineſt evidence of miracles of all kinds, (7.) and to the conviction of their own Conſciences: Notwithſtanding all which, the ſame S. *Peter* who, *Acts* 2. 23. had charged them home in theſe words, *Ye men of Iſrael have with wicked hands crucified and ſlain Jeſus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles, and wonders and ſigns, which God by him did in the midſt of you, as ye your ſelves know*, &c. yet in the 38. Verſe, he exhorts the ſame men to repentance, and to *be baptized that they may receive remiſſion of ſins*, and the ſingular favour of *the gift of the Holy Ghoſt*.

To theſe and ſeveral other Inſtances of great ſins (which might eaſily be added) we may caſt in for the greater evidence of the vaſtneſs of the divine mercy, that he pardons not only ſingle acts of ſin, (how heinous ſoever) but long courſes and habits of ſin, and thoſe of ſeveral natures and kinds; as in *Manaſſes*, and in the Publicans and Harlots; but that we may riſe higher yet in admiration of the divine clemency, we obſerve,

2. In the ſecond place, that he pardons alſo relapſed ſinners. They have a ſaying, *Non licet in bello bis peccare*, that the firſt faults in war are ſeverely vindicated; becauſe there all errours are fatal, and ſcarce leave a capacity of being repeated. And there are ſome relations ſo near and intimate, and their ligaments ſo nice and curious; that a breach

breach in them can never be repaired or knit again But the relation of a Father, and the goodneſs of a God, leave always room for pardon. Nay further, *They ſay* (ſaith the Prophet *Jeremiah*) *if a man put away his Wife, and ſhe go from him, and become another man's, ſhall he return to her again? But thou (O Iſrael) haſt plaid the harlot with many lovers, yet return again unto me ſaith the Lord*, Jer. 2. 1, 2.

§. VI. The doctrine of the *Novatians* carried a great breadth with it in the Primitive times, which denied repentance to thoſe that ſinned after Baptiſm; and for that reaſon it is thought many holy men in thoſe days deferred their Baptiſm as long as they could, that they might not defile their garments, but go from that waſhing unſpotted out of the world. The opinion ſeemed to proceed from extraordinary purity and holineſs, and therefore as I ſaid prevailed much, and had a great reputation in thoſe times, and it ſeems it took its riſe from a miſtake of a paſſage in the Epiſtle to the *Hebrews*, *Chap.* 6. 4. However, it was damned by the moſt learned and holy Fathers of the Church, and particularly S. *Baſil* and *Gr. Nazianzen* call it a damnable doctrine, and deſtructive of Souls, in that it diſcouraged and kept men off from repentance, which God is always ready to admit of, if it be ſincere, and ſuch as we have before deſcribed.

It is true which *Clemens* of *Alexandria* hath ſaid, that to make a common practiſe of ſinning, and then pretending repentance, (as if we would give God and the Devil their turns) is an argument both of an impenitent and unbelieving temper; for as he

Ἀεὶ δὲ συνεχεῖς καὶ ἐπάλληλοι ἐπὶ τοῖς ἁμαρτήμασι μετάνοιαι, οὐδὲν τῶν καθάπαξ μὴ πεπιστευκότων διαφέρουσιν, &c. Cl. Alex. *Strom.* 2.

ſaith

ſaith afterwards, * *Theſe frequent repentances (as it were of courſe,) betray rather an intention of ſinning again, than any deſign of leaving it*, and therefore find no acceptance with God. And it is alſo certain, that a man that hath frequently relaſped, having thereby exceedingly multiplied his guilt, muſt needs feel very bitter pangs and ſharp remorſe when he doth return, and will be ever after very apt to queſtion his own ſincerity; and which is worſe, it is to be feared, that (like as it is with bones which have been often out and ſet again, they will be very apt to ſlip awry; ſo) this perſon will be juſtly looked upon as in great danger, and therefore hath a neceſſity of extraordinary watchfulneſs over himſelf. But notwithſtanding all this, if ſuch a man, after ſeveral falls and ſlips ſhall ſtand right and firm at laſt, and demonſtrate the truth of his now penitent ſtate by the following courſe of an holy Liſe, there is no queſtion to be made of his acceptance with a merciful God. For God doth not proceed with men upon ſuch terms as we do, our paſſions are ſtirred many times, and the provocation is too great for us to be able to concoct; but he is pure mind and reaſon hath no boiling paſſion, no revenge, ſeeks only the good of his Creatures, and ſo they become at laſt capable of his favour and bleſſing; he is contented, and hath his end. Beſides. he that hath made it our Duty, that as often as our Brother offends againſt us and repents, ſo often we ſhould forgive him, doth not certainly intend to be outdone by us in mercy, the moſt glorious of all his attributes.

* Μελέτε γὰρ ἔμπαλιν ἁμαρτιῶν, τὸ πολλάκις μετανοεῖν.

*Luk.* 17.4. *Philo Jud. lib. de victim.* obſerves, that in the Sacrifices for ſin, that part of the Sacrifice which was to be eaten, was allowed only to the Prieſts, and by them to be conſumed in the ſame day, and nothing of it to be carried out of the Temple. Of which he (according to his cuſtom) gives this myſtical and very ingenious account, *viz.* That the former ſins of thoſe who were now penitent and came to propitiate God to them by ſacrifice, ſhould not be made known nor remembred, or the reputation of ſuch perſons expoſed to the malice of envious and impertinent perſons.

3. God's

3. God's pardon of ſin upon Repentance is full and compleat without any reſervation; he retains no old grudge, hath no concealed ſpite, never rips up the old quarrel, never upbraids men with former follies, but caſts all behind him, and buries them in oblivion. It is not uſually thus with men, they have a diſtinction, *they will forgive* (they ſay) *but not forget*; and it is common with Princes to ſeem to pardon only till they have opportunity of a full revenge. It was ſtrange that a man of ſuch ſincerity as *David* ſhould have ſuch a reſerve, and yet ſo it was, that after he had promiſed and ſworn to *Shimei*, that he *ſhould not die*, 2. Sam. 19. 23. notwithſtanding 1 *Kings* 2. 9. He gives it in charge to his Son and Succeſſor *Solomon*, that he ſhould *not ſuffer his hoary head to come to the grave without blood.* But it is not thus with God, his acts of grace are without repentance on his part, he never retracts or revokes them, never clogs them with conditions, nor finds out evaſions afterwards; if he pardon, all is well and ſecure, he will never depart from it, unleſs the ſinner depart from his repentance, and ſo exclude himſelf from pardon.

The *Italians* have a proverbial ſaying, that they will forgive an Enemy, but never truſt him; for faſhion-ſake they will ſeem to forgive, that is, they will ceaſe to quarrel, or they will not directly revenge themſelves, but they will only rake up the fire in its own aſhes; they will retain a perpetual jealouſie of ſuch a perſon, and malign him; it ſhall not be ſaid they hate him, but it ſhall appear they do not love him.

Thus

Thus like thoſe long burning Lamps which have been diſcovered in old Monuments, whilſt they are kept cloſe under ground they burn more ſlowly, but ſo much the more laſtingly. So men ſuppreſſing only their paſſion, perpetuate it; whereas perhaps it was more deſirable they ſhould give it vent that ſo it might expire. But God is not of a vindictive nature, as we have ſhewed before, he needs not conceal his anger, becauſe he can execute it when he will, and there can lie no neceſſity upon his affairs to tempt him to pretend reconciliation when it is not cordial; no, he is a God of peace and of truth, his mercies are as the great Mountains, ſtable and firm, thoſe that repent he pardons; and thoſe whom he pardons he loves; and thoſe he loves, he will truſt and admit them to honour, and treat them as friends, with the greateſt ſecurity, and confidence. By this means he demonſtrates (1.) the greatneſs of his own mind, the largeneſs of his heart, and (2.) the infallibility of his wiſdom; that he is above fear, and above ſurprizal; (3.) hereby he aſſures the great value he hath for true goodneſs, that it alone, and nothing elſe comparably ſways with him: and hereby he lays the mightieſt obligations upon men to be good, and to perſevere ſo. Thus *Auguſtus* made *Herod* of a formidable Enemy to become a faithful Friend, and ſeveral others have made the like experiment. And now this would lead me immediately to the ſecond Stage of this part of the Parable, namely, the accumulative kindneſs the Father ſhews to the Son; but I will crave the Readers

*Levit.* 19. 17. Thou ſhalt not hate thy Brother in thy heart, thou ſhalt in any wiſe rebuke thy Brother, *&c.* The Jewiſh Interpreters take the meaning of the Law to be to this effect. *q. d.* if thy Brother have offended thee, thou ſhalt not retain an old grudge in thy heart againſt him, but rather expoſtulate the matter, and vent your paſſion preſently, than conceal and ſmother it againſt another time.

Joſeph. *Antiq. li.* 15. *c.* 10.

ders patience a little whilſt I make a few practical reflections upon this we have ſaid already.

§. VII. And in the firſt place, beſides all we have yet behind, this that we have diſcourſed hitherto repreſents to us the bleſſed and comfortable condition of juſtification and peace with God. *O bleſſed is the man whoſe tranſgreſſion is forgiven, and whoſe ſin is covered. Bleſſed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity*, Pſal. 32. 1, 2.

To have all a men's debts cancelled, his follies paſt over and buried in forgetfulneſs, his deformities covered, his Conſcience quieted, and the light of God's countenance to ſhine upon him; to have no frightful reflection upon what is paſt, no diſmal proſpect of what is to come, no old ſtory riped up, no former quarrel revived, no latent diſpleaſure, no rancour nor jealouſie harboured againſt us: This muſt needs fill a man with chearfulneſs in all conditions, and bear him up above all adverſities, above poverty, reproach, ſickneſs, confinement, and whatſoever can befall us in this world. Such a man ſhall not need to reſort to drink and jollity, to relax his thoughts, to divert his anxiety, to bear up his ſpirit; he hath comfort from within, a continual feaſt in his own Conſcience. *Who ſhall lay any thing to his charge? it is God which juſtifieth: Who is he that condemneth? it is Chriſt that died, —— Who ſhall ſeparate him from the love of God? ſhall tribulation, or diſtreſs*, &c. Rom. 8. 33, 34, 35. The ſting of all theſe things is taken out, ſince God hath pardoned his ſin.

But on the contrary, when a Man knows God is angry with him, and his own Conſcience upbraids and dogs him, the ſad remembrance of his many provocations terrify him, and the fearful expectation

pectation of wrath to come alarms him; he muſt needs be in a caſe like that of *Belſhazzar*, when the fingers of an hand were ſeen writing upon the Wall over him in the midſt of all his jollity, *His countenance was changed, his thoughts were troubled, the joints of his loins were looſed, and his knees ſmote one againſt another.* All the entertainments of ſenſe do little in this caſe; nay they are flat and inſipid, and the ſmiles of the world no whit chear a man ſo long as God frowns upon him. Daniel 5.

It was an ingenious device whereby a Gentleman of this Nation repreſented his condition in a publick entertainment at Court; he ſets out a Ship bitterly oppreſt by a tempeſt, and ready to periſh under its difficulties; and in the mean while a Rain-Bow appearing, towards which this word is addreſſed, *quid tu ſi pereo? q. d.* "What am I the "better for hopes and ſmiles, for Court-favour "and countenance, whilſt in the mean time my "condition admits no delay, and I am ruined in "my private fortunes;

But as the torments of guilt are incomparably more ſevere than the afflictions of outward fortune, ſo it is far more unreaſonable to think to allay them by the blandiſhments of the world, than the other by Court Holy Water. No, it is nothing but God's mercy in the pardon of ſin that can alleviate the troubles, and abate the anguiſh of Conſcience; and when he is pleaſed upon repentance to do that, then he ſaith to the Soul, as *Chriſt Jeſus* ſaid to the *Paralytick*, Matt. 9. 2. *Son be of good chear, thy ſins are forgiven thee*; or as the ſame our Saviour to *Zacchæus*, *this day is ſalvation come to thy houſe.*

2. Secondly, ſince God pardons ſinners in that ample manner we have before expreſt; *i. e.* ſo

frankly, as that neither the greatneſs, multitude, repetition, or other aggravation of ſin hinders him; and ſo fully as that no old ſcore remains upon record againſt the Penitent: it may raiſe in us great admiration of his infinite goodneſs, beget the moſt amiable notions of him in our minds, and provoke us to love him with all our hearts. So our Saviour concludes in the Goſpel, that where moſt is forgiven, there muſt undoubtedly lie the greateſt obligations of love and gratitude. The Apoſtle tells us, Rom. 5. 7. *That ſcarcely for a righteous man will one die, but for a good man ſome would even dare to die.* All God's Attributes of power, and wiſdom, and holineſs, are very amiable and lovely, but this of his goodneſs in forgiving ſins comes moſt home to us, in that he doth not rigidly inſiſt on his own right, but comply with our neceſſity, and relieve our miſery. To give and beſtow benefits upon us is goodneſs, but to forgive is greater, becauſe here he diveſts himſelf of his own right, recedes from his own claim, and that for our unſpeakable benefit. In ſhort, he ſeems not to conſider himſelf but us only, in the diſpenſations of his mercy: he is as good as good can be, and therefore there is all the reaſon in the world that we ſhould love him as much as is poſſible. And one of the beſt and moſt acceptable ways of expreſſing that is that which

3. Thirdly, I make a third inference, *viz.* that we imitate this goodneſs and mercifulneſs of his; this is preſt upon us by our Saviour, *Be ye merciful as your Father in heaven is merciful.* It is ſaid of *Cato*, that the ſtrict ſanctity of his own life made him a ſevere and rigid Magiſtrate; he knew not how to pardon in other Men what he would not permit in himſelf. If God, who is a holy and immaculate Being,

Being, ſhould ſeverely animadvert our failings, we could not blame him though we were undone by it; nay, it ought to be the greateſt wonder to us in the whole world that he doth not do ſo, conſidering the greatneſs of his Majeſty, the juſtice and wiſdom of his Laws, and ſuch other things of this nature, as we have formerly repreſented. But it is the moſt abſurd thing in nature, that we who are great offenders our ſelves, that have infinite need of mercy at God's hands, that we ſhould be cruel and vindictive towards each other; that God ſhould cover our follies, and we blazon thoſe of other men; ſhall he pardon us worms, and we be remorſleſs towards our Brethren? doth he conſider humane infirmity, bind up the wounds of the contrite, ſo as to leave no ſcar or blemiſh behind, of all their former miſcarriages? and do we rake in the wounds, proclaim the follies, uncover the nakedneſs and ſhame of our neighbour? is it tolerable for us to equal our ſelves with God, or are offences greater againſt us than againſt him? ſhall we dare to do what we dare not wiſh ſhould be done to us? *Do not we pray, Enter not into judgment with thy Servants*, &c. and confeſs, *That if God be extream to mark what we have done amiſs, that none can abide it*; and do we ſcrupulouſly weigh, ſeverely aggravate, and rigorouſly animadvert the ſins of others againſt our ſelves? doth God forgive us by talents, and we unmercifully exact the utmoſt farthing?

Indeed, we may obſerve it to be the genius and cuſtom of evil men, to remember invidiouſly the faults which penitent men have forſaken, to the end that they may revenge themſelves upon them for that change which condemns their own obſtinate perſeverance in ſuch courſes, or as hoping

to excuſe or juſtifie their conſtant naughtineſs, by remarking the temporary compliance of thoſe other with them, whoſe contrary courſe now ſhames and reproaches them: But it is quite otherwiſe with all good men, they partly out of a ſenſe of humanity, partly to incourage men to repentance, and partly alſo to confirm and ſecure ſuch as have repented, from all temptations to apoſtaſie, draw a curtain over their former miſdemeanors, and forget what they have forſaken and God hath forgiven; therefore if we will either take pattern by God or them, we ought to do ſo too.

Laſtly, but above all the reſt, the conſideration of God's pardon, and the egregious circumſtances thereof, ſhould be a mighty encouragement to all ſinners to repentance; when we remember how gracious a Father we grieve by a wilful deſtroying of our ſelves, how much he pities us, and longs for our return: what a ſerene countenance, hearty welcome, full pardon, gracious reception; and how innumerable and ineſtimable bleſſings we ſhall have poured out upon us at our ſo doing. And this brings me again to the ſecond part of the penitent Son's entertainment, to which therefore I now proceed.

CHAP.

The Father said unto his servants, bring forth the best robe

patitur contriti cordis holocaustum repulsam. Quotiens te
ritum sanctum non dubito aspirantem: cum intueor flenten

robe and put it on him. &c.t S.t LVKE. 15. 22.

ns te in conspectu Domini video suspirantem,
entem, sentio ignoscentem. Cypr: serm: de cœna.
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## CHAP. II.

### Of Sanctification.

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§ I. *What is meant by the beſt Robe: and that it is the uſual phraſe of Scripture to ſet out the ornaments of the mind by thoſe of the body.*

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§. I. THere is a never-failing ſpring of kindneſs and good will in Parents towards their Children, which flows with that life and vigour that nothing is able to dam it up or interrupt it ſo, but that if it be obſtructed one way it breaks out and diſcovers it ſelf another. If the Children prove ſingularly good and vertuous, then paternal affection bears a mighty ſtream, overflows all its banks; the Parents feel an unſpeakable delight and ſatisfaction, and their Children are then the Crown of their age, their joy and triumph. If they happen to be but tolerable, they are ready to interpret all to the beſt, and prone to heap bleſſings

and kindneſſes upon them. And if they degenerate and prove very bad and undutiful, this though it checks the tide, yet cannot divert the current; for at worſt they cannot ceaſe to pity them. There is in like manner an everlaſting propenſion in Almighty God to do good to men, inſomuch that when they are very bad he pities them; as ſoon as they begin to be good he loves and bleſſes them, but when they become generouſly vertuous and holy, he takes complacency in them; and all theſe different degrees of divine favour we have lively repreſented to us in the Parable before us. But we are now upon the ſecond of them, namely, the great and ſingular bleſſings which the Father frankly beſtows upon his Son now that he hath repented of his extravagancy, and is reconciled to him. And under this rank we may reckon theſe three ſpecial inſtances.

Firſt, whereas the Father obſerved his Son to return in a very pitiful plight, either quite naked, or at moſt covered with rags; he therefore calls for the beſt Robe and puts it on him, that not only neceſſity may be provided for, and his nakedneſs covered, but he will have him appear in an Equipage ſuitable to the Son of ſuch a Father.

Again Secondly, whereas the Son in contemplation of his preſent diſtreſs and former miſcarriages, had no higher ambition than to be admitted into the condition of an hired Servant; now the Father on the other ſide will have him adorned with the Enſigns of a perſon of quality, and of a Son, and therefore puts a *Ring on his Hand*, which hath in all Ages, and amongſt moſt Nations been uſed to denoted either eminent quality, or ſingular favour.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, the Son in the time of his rebellion, amongſt other misfortunes became a ſlave (as we have obſerved before) and amongſt moſt Nations it hath been the cuſtom for ſuch to go bare-foot, and only Free-men to be ſhod; now the Father in token of his Son's emancipation, commands *to put ſhooes on his feet.*

All which three things together amount to this, That the Father having forgiven his Son upon his ſubmiſſion and return, now puts him into as good a condition in all reſpects as he was in before his rebellion. And from thence according to the Analogy of the Parable we may infer, that our Heavenly Father upon the ſincere repentance of ſinners is ſo fully reconciled to them, that they ſtand upon the ſame terms with him as if they had never ſinned; they are reſtored to as good a condition as that of *Adam* in innocency. And we might content our ſelves with this general application, but that S. *Chryſoſtom*, S. *Jerom*, S. *Auſtin*, *Theophylact*, and the generality of the Ancients carry it further, and make a particular interpretation of theſe ſeveral paſſages; in conformity to whoſe judgments we will thus render the meaning of the three aforeſaid favours.

1. *By the beſt Robe is to be underſtood the excellent ornament of more compleat holineſs and fuller Sanctification, which God works in, and beſtows upon a ſinner upon his reconciliation to himſelf.*

2. *By the Ring is intimated the gift of the Holy Ghoſt, which is conferred upon thoſe men that are juſtified and ſanctified as the pledge of their adoption, and earneſt of their inheritance.*

3. *By*

3. *By the Shooes, the honour of being imployed in the Service of God for the drawing others home to him.* The grounds of which interpretations, I will assign as I handle the particulars severally, and I begin with the first.

1. *The Best Robe, Stolam* (saith S. *Jerom*) *quam* Adam *peccando perdiderat, stolam quæ in alia parabola dicitur indumentum nuptiale, The Robe which* Adam *lost when he sinned, and in defect of which he covered himself with Fig-leaves, that Robe which in another Parable is called the Wedding Garment.* And S. *Chrysostom*, Τὴν στολὴν, τὴν ἄνωθεν ὑφαντὴν, τὴν ἐκ τοῦ πνεύματος καὶ πυρὸς καταρτιζομένην, &c. *The Garment of an heavenly contexture, the white Robe which they are cloathed with that are baptized with the Holy Ghost and with Fire*; agreeably herewith *Theophylact, the Best or first Robe*, (for so the Greek word in the Text imports) that is, (saith he) τὴν ἀρκαίαν, *the ancient Robe*, which we wore before we sinned, that which the Scripture means, when it saith, *put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ*; that is, put ye off the old vicious habits and practices, and imitate the example of *Christ Jesus*, and put on the holy temper of the Gospel.

Chrysost. *homilia* Περὶ ἀσώτου.

Whosoever hath been ever so little conversant in the Holy Scripture, cannot but have observed it to be the usual stile thereof, to denote both the inward qualities of the mind, and the outward accustomary actions of the life by the garments of the body; and it would be unnecessary, and therefore tedious, to recite the many passages there to be found to that purpose. But I cannot omit that in the *Revelations*, Chap. 19. Vers. 8. *To her was given to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white,*

*for*

*for white linen is the righteouſneſs of Saints.* By the Woman is there meant the Church of *Chriſt*, called the Lamb's Wife, whoſe ornaments are righteouſneſs and holineſs, and they are metaphorically repreſented by white garments.

And if we conſider all the uſes of Garments, there is nothing more exactly correſponds therewith, nor more fit to be figuratively expreſſed by alluſion to them, than holy and vertuous qualifications. For if Garments are uſed for diſtinction, what makes a greater and truer diſtinction betwixt man and man than their lives and tempers? It is not being high or low, rich or poor, noble or ignoble, learned or idiotical, which makes ſo great a difference betwixt them, as when one is good and vertuous, and another vicious and prophane.

If Garments are for Ornament, and to cover our uncomelineſs, what is there repreſents a man more lovely and beautiful than the Ornament of a quiet mind, a juſt temper, an holy life? and what diſguiſes and deforms men like to Vice and Debauchery?

If again, Garments are for defence againſt the injuries of weather, and other accidents, what is there that gives a Man that ſecurity and confidence which innocency of life and ſincere piety affords him? and on the other ſide, what expoſes and lays a Man open to all the calamities of this life, and to the wrath of God in the world to come, but naughty and evil practices, proceeding from a corrupt and vicious temper? Wherefore there is both plain reaſon, and good authority of all kinds to make this application of the firſt favour, which the reconciled Father vouchſafes his returning Son, and to ſay that thereby is denoted in the figurative

ſenſe,

ſenſe, that God when he hath pardoned the penitent, then confers further meaſures of Sanctification upon him.

§. II. But if it ſhall be ſaid that Sanctification muſt go before Juſtification, inaſmuch as though an Earthly Parent may be reconciled to his Son that is not truly good, yet God cannot be reconciled to ſinners continuing ſo, or until they become new men; and therefore ſome other allegory is to be ſought here, and not that which we (concurrently with the Fathers) have pitched upon. I anſwer, the doctrine is true which this objection is grounded upon, but the inference there-from will not reach us: for I have ſhewed already, that ſome meaſure of real ſanctification muſt go before juſtification and pardon, becauſe God, though he bear a conſtant good-will to mankind, yet (as the objection well ſuggeſts, and we have acknowledged before,) is he not tranſported with any fondneſs towards any man's meer perſon, ſo as to be reconciled to him whilſt he ſtands at defiance with himſelf, becauſe he is a pure, holy and juſt Majeſty, and conſequently cannot without denying himſelf, and contradiction to his own nature, either delight in a vicious perſon, or hate a good Man. And beſides, if it were conſiſtent with his nature, yet will not his wiſdom, and the intereſt of his government of the world permit that he cauſe the Sun of his countenance and favour to ſhine a like upon the vicious and the vertuous, him that feareth him, and him that feareth him not. And therefore he requires of all thoſe ſinners that hope to recover his favour, that they have not only a ſerious ſenſe of, and hearty remorſe for their ſins; but

but actual reformation of their evil ways, at leaſt ſo far as they have opportunity, in which conſiſts that repentance which we carefully deſcribed under the ſecond part of this Parable. Notwithſtanding, it is true alſo, that he accepts beginnings, and pardons as ſoon as the converſion is true and real, and before thoſe vital principles of grace attain their full maturity and perfection. Wherefore being both an holy and a merciful God, as his benignity on the one hand prompts him to receive ſuch into mercy, who have ſincere though weak beginnings of the divine life; ſo on the other hand, the purity and perfection of his nature puts him upon requiring fuller meaſures of conformity to himſelf in thoſe he makes the objects of his mercy and favour, than what for the preſent he accepts of; in conſeqnence of which it is, that having (as we have ſhewed) received the penitent to pardon, he then proceeds to make him a veſſel of honour fit for his uſe, by conferring upon him further degrees of ſanctification, *i. e.* putting upon him *the beſt robe.*

Agreeably to which ſenſe ſpeak theſe following Scriptures, John 15. 2. *Every branch in me that beareth fruit, he purgeth it that it may bear more fruit.* Epheſ. 5. 14. *Awake thou that ſleepeſt, and ariſe from the dead, and Chriſt ſhall give the light.* And again, Phil. 1 6. *He that hath begun a good work in you, will alſo perform* (or perfect, ἐπιτελέσει) *it till the day of Jeſus Chriſt.* All which Scriptures plainly intimate thus much, that ſome meaſures of ſincere ſanctification go before juſtification, the full accompliſhment of which is by the grace of God to be gradually attained afterwards.

It

It was amongſt the well known Paradoxes of the Stoicks, πάντα τὰ ἁμαρτήματα ἴσα εἶναι, that all vertues were equal, and that all goodneſs conſiſted in *punctо*, in a very point; which notion * *Seneca* confirms and explains thus, *That as there is but one truth, for that nothing can be more than true, and therefore no one thing can be truer than another that is true*; ſo (ſaith he) *there is but one rectitude of humane actions, vertue conſiſts in a certain proportion, which whatſoever exactly obſerves not, is not vertue.* And agreeably hereto † *Plutarch* reports the ſaying of *Ariſto* of *Chios*, that there could be but one vertue, which therefore he calls ὑγίεια, or the *health of the mind.* But notwithſtanding all theſe ſayings of that ſtubborn Sect, and whatever elſe may be pretended by ſuch as tread in their ſteps, there is without doubt a great deal of difference between what God will mercifully accept, and what he may and doth righteouſly require; between thoſe lower degrees of grace that may be ſincere, and find acceptance for the preſent, and that generous ſtate of holineſs which God deſigns to bring men to by the methods of the Goſpel: or to follow their Metaphor, as there is a vaſt difference betwixt Athletick health, and that proper for a ſtudent, ſo is there no leſs between the ſtrength of a new convert, and the attainment of an old, ſtable, and well exerciſed Chriſtian; and conſequently allowing the ſincerity of the former, there is ſtill room for further improvements, and this fuller ſanctification which we here underſtand by the *Beſt Robe.*

* *Nihil inventis rectius recto non magis quàm vero verius; omnis in modo vertus eſt, modus eſt certa menſura.* Senec. *Ep.* 65.

† Plutarch. *de virt. moral.*

For the clearer eviction of which, both becauſe it may be of uſe to comfort beginners for the preſent, and alſo to cure their ſloth and ſecurity for the future, I ſubjoin theſe three particulars

to

to lay open the difference betwixt the usual stature of beginners, and the highest attainments of great proficients in Religion.

§. III. 1. When a sinner is newly converted from his evil ways, although the change be very sincere, and such as in time will draw after it an universal reformation, yet usually it expresses it self at first, by a remarkable zeal against the most gross and notorious miscarriages which such a person hath been liable to, and doth not presently amend all the lesser deviations of his life, partly because perhaps he doth not yet discern them, and partly because it is possible he hath yet so much to do of the former kind, as to employ all his intention and power for the present. The new birth is frequently in the Scripture represented by the natural, and in nothing doth the resemblance hold more true than in this, *viz.* as in nature there is not a perfect man formed at first, with all his members, and in his just dimensions, but only a salient particle, a little fountain of life that bubbles up, and by degrees displays it self in all the curious lines of humane shape; so here in the works of grace, there is a vital principle, a divine particle, that in its first essays draws only a heart or some of the great *viscera* of the new man, but being lively and vigorous, in process of time displays it self in all the functions of holy life. They therefore that talk of an instantaneous conversion in such sort, as to imagine that a man dead in trespasses and sins should presently start up sound and perfect, and without so much as his Grave-Cloaths about him, neither understand themselves, nor have any experience of the orderly and almost insensible progress of the divine grace.

In this *Seneca* places his third and lowest rank of virtuous men, *extra multa & magna vitia sunt, sed non extra omnia*, Ep. 75.

It

It is true, in every regenerate perſon there is from the very beginning, a reſolution againſt all ſin, a deteſtation of, and declared hoſtility againſt, all the works of the Devil; but the War is not finiſhed as ſoon as it is proclaimed or commenced. He that fights againſt Principalities and Powers muſt War a great while, and perhaps have the fortune of the *Romans*, who were ſaid, *prælio ſæpe, bello nunquam ſuperari*, they get ground daily upon the whole, though ſometimes defeated in particular deſigns: there is no decretorian Battle, nor is the buſineſs decided upon a puſh: it is ſincerely done to conquer our beloved luſts and greater enormities, though yet ſome ſmaller infirmities be not vanquiſhed, ſo long as they are honeſtly reſolved againſt; for it is well and wiſely done, firſt to break the head and main body of the Enemy, and then it will be eaſie to glean up the ſtraglers. If once the principal diſeaſe be remedied, the ſymptoms will by degrees be out-grown, and moſt men of that rank I am ſpeaking of, find it a great while before they come to have nothing to do but to conquer wandering thoughts, imperfect duties, and beginnings of evil.

Beſides, it is very conſiderable that ſins are not only contrary to vertue, but to each other: and as it is uſual with wiſe Princes againſt a powerfull Enemy, to aſſociate not only their friends and ancient Allies, but alſo thoſe they do not love, ſo long as they are Enemies to the common Enemy; ſo it happens here, that a Convert zealouſly combating againſt ſome one vice, in ſtudious declenſion of that, inſenſibly ſlips into ſome degrees of the other extream, and then finds it a freſh difficulty, *vincere eos per quos viciſti*, to conquer that other infirmity by which he conquered the former.

To

To which purpoſe it is remarkable concerning that holy man S. *Jerom*, whilſt he lived in the affluence of the City, and uſed a free Converſation, he felt frequent temptations of the fleſh, and ſetting himſelf with all his might to mortifie theſe, and to do it effectually, retired into a deſart, that he might both take away the cauſe, and the occaſions of thoſe dangers; but whilſt in that retirement he exerciſes himſelf to great ſeverity and auſterity, he inſenſibly grew into a blameable aſperity of temper, which needed a ſecond labour to ſubdue.

I will not ſay, as ſome do, that as God would have ſome remainders of the ſeven Nations preſerved amongſt the Children of *Iſrael* in the Land of *Canaan*, to be continually as thorns in their Eyes, and goads in their Sides; ſo he orders it that there ſhould be ſome remainders of the old *Adam* in us to keep us always humble and employed; for certainly God would have all ſin expelled our natures. But this I ſay, that as Iſrael was truly in poſſeſſion of the Land of *Canaan*, from ſuch time as *Joſhua* had conquered thoſe powers that made head againſt them, and had put the chief Cities and places of ſtrength into their hands, notwithſtanding that a long time after ſome of thoſe old inhabitants remained amongſt them, and were no very good neighbours; ſo I affirm that ſo long as there is not only a reſolution againſt all ſin, but a conſtant hoſtile purſuit of it, and that a Man goes on conquering and to conquer; ſuch a man is a true *Iſraelite*, though he have not perfected his conqueſt nor can yet ſay with S. *Paul*, *I have fought the good fight, I have finiſhed my courſe, I have kept the faith, and therefore henceforth is laid up for me the Crown of righteouſneſs.*

But now foraſmuch as God, both for his own glory and ſervice, the comfort of the Convert's own Soul, and his greater capacity of the Kingdom of Heaven, deſigns to bring Men to higher degrees of ſanctification than what he was pleaſed to accept of when he firſt received the Penitent to mercy, therefore he afterwards puts upon him the *Beſt Robe*.

2. It is to be conſidered that the beginnings of all things (that are any way notable eſpecially) are wrought with pain and difficulty; inſomuch that *nemo repente fit turpiſſimus, no man finds it very eaſy at firſt to do any egregious wickedneſs.* Men become evil by degrees, and there is proficiency even in the Devil's School; and therefore much more reaſonably may it be expected that thoſe that firſt enter into a ſtrict courſe of vertue, ſhould be ſenſible of difficulty in their undertaking.

Plutarch. *de prof. in virt.*

It was an ingenious anſwer which *Plutarch* reports to have been given by a *Lacedæmonian* Tutor, when he was asked what he pretended to, and of what avail his indeavours were; *I make* (ſaith he) *that to become eaſy and delightful which is of it ſelf good and neceſſary.* It is true, *Chriſt Jeſus* tells us his *yoke is eaſy and his burden is light*, and without doubt it is ſo, but it is a *yoke* and a *burden* ſtill, and no man finds it eaſy until he have exerciſed himſelf to it: rewards and puniſhments ſet before us, and reaſon and reſolution working thereupon will prevail with men to do their duty; but only practice and aſſuetude makes it become eaſy and familiar ſo to do; eſpecially ſuppoſing (as we do in the preſent Caſe) a man but lately accuſtomed to indulge himſelf in a courſe of ſin, let ſuch a man's Converſion be never ſo real and hearty, however it cannot be expected that he ſhould preſently

ſently *do Chriſt's commands, and ſay they are not grievous.* It is certain ſuch a man (if he be what we ſuppoſe him, that is, ſincere,) will reſiſt his inclination, and change his Courſe; but becauſe it was lately a courſe, there will yet be an inclination towards it, and conſequently a conflict and difficulty in avoiding it; for (as we ſaid before) it is only one cuſtom can perfectly ſupplant another, and only habit can imitate nature, and make eaſy: the cutting off our corrupt members is a hard task, till by time and degrees they become mortified, and then it is done without any conſiderable pain or difficulty. Whoſoever hath any principle of divine life, or true ſenſe of God in him, will not allow himſelf in the neglect of God's worſhip, yet he will find it no eaſy buſineſs to hold his heart intent and conſtant in it, till it have become cuſtomary and natural to him; and then it is ſo far eaſy and delightful to him, that he knows not how to live without it. Now although that ſtate which tuggs at the Oar, and draws on heavily, may be ſincere, becauſe it diſcharges its duty honeſtly, though with great difficulty; and therefore finds acceptance with a good God: yet foraſmuch as his intention is that we ſhould become *partakers of the divine nature, and that it be our meat and drink to do his will, that the way of his commands be to us as our neceſſary food,* that we ſhould do his will with that alacrity on earth, with which it is done by the Angels in Heaven, that our will ſhould be perfectly conformed to his, and Religion become natural to us, partly to the end that we may do him the more honour (for there is nothing doth ſo much reputation to the divine Law and Government, as the chearful obedience of his Subjects) partly alſo that we may be the more fit for the

Kingdom of Heaven, (for thoſe moſt eaſily fall in with the Heavenly Quire, who have practiſed their part before-hand) therefore ſince he deſires that we ſhould not only be not evil, but generouſly good; nor meerly draw on heavily and uncomfortably, but fly, as upon the Wings of a Cherub in his ſervice; it ſeems good to him when he hath pardoned a penitent to confer upon him greater meaſures of Sanctification.

3. A young Convert though he have all the parts and members of a perfect man in *Chriſt*, and ſhould alſo be ſuppoſed in great meaſure to have overcome the difficulties which always attend vertuous beginnings, yet he is but a beginner, and muſt needs be conceived weak and feeble in his whole contexture; he is not only apt to be abuſed with Sophiſtry, and *carried about with every wind of doctrine*, but leſs able to bear the burdens and to reſiſt the temptations he muſt expect to meet with; the traces of his former courſe are not yet worn out, and ſo he is the apter to return; he is not at the top, but going up Hill, and may eaſily faint or ſlip; he hath not ſuch experience of the wiles of the Devil, but he may be impoſed upon; he is not ſo fleſht with victory, but his heart may fail him; in ſhort, grace is rather a diſpoſition than a habit in him, and vertue more an inclination than a nature, and therefore he may fall away. But there is a virile ſtate of vertue attainable when duty is turned into nature, and that which is beſt in it ſelf is alſo moſt pleaſant and delectable. When a Man is ſo long exerciſed in the ways of holineſs that it is as much a road to him, as the courſe of ſin was, either heretofore to him, or is now to others; and neither the length of the race is tedious to him, nor the diſpatch difficult;

when

when a Man ſhall neither ſtagger in his choice, nor be flat and formal in his proſecution; he hath taſted the Grapes of *Canaan*, and never more longs to return to *Ægypt*, but diſdains the Fleſh-poſts, the Onions, and the Garlick thereof, as much as he formerly groaned under the ſervitude. Such a man having *put on the whole armour of God, is ſtrong in the Lord, and in the power of his might*, and defies all the powers of darkneſs: the Devil himſelf is aſhamed to tempt him, having been ſo often baffled by him; and he ſtands immoveable as a Rock, ſtable as an Angel, and all *the Gates of Hell cannot prevail againſt him.* Now becauſe this admirable condition is both deſirable and poſſible, and that which God deſigns to bring Men to, therefore he proceeds to ſuperadd to the Convert further meaſures of ſanctification.

Πείθονται τοῖς ὡρισμένοις νόμοις, καὶ τοῖς ἰδίοις βίοις νικῶσι τοὺς νόμους. Juſt. Mart. *Ep. ad Diognet.*

Now for the way of effecting this, beſides thoſe ſecret ways of working which we cannot penetrate into, by which it pleaſes God to bring about this glorious deſign, there are theſe three ways following which fall within our underſtanding.

*By what means the further Sanctification of the Penitent is carried on.*

§. IV. Firſt, there is nothing more plainly diſcernible in a Convert than that the firſt workings of the grace of God in his heart revive a true ingenuity of ſpirit in him, which is the very groundwork and foundation of all improvements; and then God being pleaſed graciouſly and freely to give him the pardon of all his ſins, lays ſo mighty an obligation upon that ingenuity, as is of force to put all the powers of the Soul upon their utmoſt activity, and thereby the temper of ſuch a perſon is marvellouſly raiſed and improved. * For there is a vaſt difference betwixt the efficacy

* *Pſal.* 119. v 32. I ſhall run the way of thy Commands, when thou haſt enlarged my heart. *vid.* Dr. *Hammond in loc.*

of a ſpirit of bondage, and the ſpirit of adoption: if the former may be able to reſtrain ſin, yet it can never inflame men to generous goodneſs; or if that impreſſes a caution of offending out of apprehenſion of the wrath of God, the latter riſes higher, and ſtirs up endeavour of returning love for love; the one is apt to enquire after the *minimum quod ſic* (as they call it) the loweſt meaſure of grace that will but ſerve the turn to avoid Hell; the other ſeeks *aliquid eximium*, and thinks nothing enough by way of grateful return, and therefore courts occaſions, and rejoyces in difficulties as happy opportunities of demonſtrating his ingenious ſenſe of his obligations.

When *Cyrus* had vanquiſhed *Cræſus*, and having it in his power to deſtroy him, not only preſerved him but imployed him, and made him privy to his Counſels, meer generoſity provoked him to become not a true Priſoner, but a faithfull Friend and uſefull Counſellor. But our Saviour gives us the moſt illuſtrious example of that I am ſaying, *Luke* 7..37. in the inſtance of a certain Woman that had been a great ſinner, who finding out our Saviour where he was at Dinner in a Phariſee's Houſe, brings a box of very coſtly Ointment, and having waſhed his Feet with penitent tears, wiped them with her hair and kiſſed them; ſhe anoints them alſo with the precious balm ſhe had brought for that purpoſe. The Phariſees murmured at the familiar approach and acceſs of ſuch an ignominious perſon; *Judas* grudged the coſt, and all the Diſciples wondered at the novelty of the buſineſs, but our Saviour applies himſelf to *Simon*, and expounds the buſineſs to him by a Parable, verſ. 41, &c. *There was a certain creditor had two debtors*, &c. whereby he ſilences the murmurs of the one, and removes

removes the wonder of the other, ſhewing the power of gratitude, and the admirable efficacy of great obligation upon ingenuous minds.

Secondly, when God receives the Penitent into his favour, he gives him by faith a full perſuaſion of the great things in another world; the real and ſerious apprehenſions of which are able not only to place him above all the charms below, and to make him diſdain all the baits of the Devil, but alſo to tranſport him with love and deſire, and to carry him with full ſail in the proſecution of thoſe incomparable glories thus diſcovered to him, and thereby marvellouſly heightens and improves him in holineſs. So the Apoſtle, *Heb.* 11. 1. pronounces of faith that it is ὑπόστασις, *the ſubſtance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not ſeen*; that is, it makes thoſe things that ſeemed meer Fables and Romances to other men, to be the greateſt realities in the world; and thoſe things that being looked upon at a diſtance ſeemed ſmall and inconſiderable, and had little effect upon mens minds, now being made near and preſent are of mighty influence, as he ſhews at large Hiſtorically throughout that long and excellent Chapter.

For this reaſon it is that all the accompliſhments of a Chriſtian are aſcribed to his faith, *Acts* 15. 9. *Having purified their hearts by faith*; as if that ſublimed a man, and drew him off from his Lees, 2 *Pet.* 1. 4. *There are given to us exceeding great and precious promiſes, whereby you might be partakers of the divine nature*; as if the objects of faith duly operating upon us were able not only to raiſe us above the World, but above our ſelves, and to transfuſe a divine temper into us: For ſo he goes on, *verſe.* 5, 6, 7. *Add to your faith vertue, and to vertue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance*, &c.

the word he uſes is ἐπιχορηγήσατε, *q. d.* faith will lead the dance to all other vertues, or do but ſet that on work, and it will draw on the whole *Encyclopædy*, aud circle of graces.

It is matter of daily obſervation, that not only men's induſtry is increaſed (which is a great matter) but their parts alſo are raiſed and inlarged proportionably to the incouragements ſet before them; great hopes make great men, and fit them for great undertakings, inſomuch that *Quintilian* inquiring the reaſon why the former Ages bred greater Wits, and more exquiſite Orators than latter days, reſolves it into this, That thoſe times afforded the greateſt honour and incouragement to them. And it is an ordinary remark in Hiſtorians, that thoſe Princes and States have always the ableſt Miniſters, whoſe fortunes have preſented to them the moſt honorable employments and greateſt rewards. But it is more to our Buſineſs to obſerve that although in the Darker times of the Law there were ſome very great and admirable perſons, who were the prodigies of the Ages they lived in, yet ordinarily Chriſtianity ought to do and doth afford far the moſt and braveſt Hero's, by reaſon of the mighty great and clear promiſes therein exhibited. *The Law* (ſaith the Apoſtle, Hebr. 7. 19.) *made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did.* For ſhall not the glories of Heaven outſhine the felicities of a Land of *Canaan*, and the belief of the one be as operative as that of the other? And what though the one be preſent, and the other to come? yet to every good man this is as certain as that, and to every wiſe man the unſpeakable odds in the things, abundantly recompences that diſadvantage of circumſtances. What man that hath a perſuaſion of eternal life can chooſe but

but diſdain the preſent, further than as it is a time of probation for the other? and ſcorn that the mean pleaſures and allurements here ſhould interrupt his courſe thither: what difficulties will he not glory in, and what duties will he not perform to aſſure his intereſt therein? 1 Joh. 3. 3. *He that hath this hope purifies himſelf, as God is pure*, eſpecially when a man ſhall finds theſe things not only made certain to him by faith, but made near to him alſo. When he ſhall conſider himſelf now in a fair may to thoſe Cœleſtial Manſions, and that every day he approaches, nearer and nearer to Heaven. Now therefore he will *caſt off all the works of darkneſs, and put on the armour of light*; when he remembers, Rom. 13. 11. *That now his ſalvation is nearer than when he firſt-believed*, and finds that a little more exerciſe of faith and patience will bring him to his deſired Haven.

Thirdly and laſtly, our Heavenly Father puts this *Beſt Robe* upon the Son whom he hath received and pardoned, not only by the Miniſtry of his Goſpel, and all the ordinary advantages of his Church and Family, but extraordinarily improves the ſanctification of ſuch a perſon, by the ſpecial ſuperintendency, guidance and influence of his Holy Spirit. The conſideration of which brings me to the next member of the Parable, *He put a Ring on his hand*; which expreſſes the ſecond bleſſing the reconciled Father beſtows upon his penitent Son; which we are to treat of in the next Chapter.

CHAP.

## CHAP. III.

### Of the Gift of the Holy Ghoſt.

### THE CONTENTS.

§. I. *The difference between the viſits or motions of the Holy Spirit, and the gift or reſidence of it: and that the Holy Ghoſt doth reſide with, and inhabit very good men.*

§. II. *The wonderful comfort and advantages thereof in four reſpects.*

§. III. *That although ſome good men have no experience of this reſidence of the Holy Spirit, it is nevertheleſs certainly attainable in this life, and the reaſons of that caſe. The peculiar qualifications of perſons fit for the entertainment of this divine Gueſt.*

§. IV. *How to diſtinguiſh the motions of God's Spirit from the impreſſions of Satan, or the reſults of our own temper.*

§. I. THE ſecond favour which the Father beſtows upon his Son after he is reconciled to him, is, *He puts a Ring upon his Hand.* This hath by the common conſent of the world been ſymbolical either of freedom and ingenuity, of riches and affluence, of ſingular favour and reſpect, or of quality and nobility. Moſt of theſe things S. *James* bears teſtimony to in that paſſage of his, Chap. 2. 2. *If there come into your aſſemblies a man having a gold ring, and goodly apparel, and there come in alſo a poor man in vile raiment and ye have reſpect to him in the gay cloathing*, &c. And for the reſt,

reſt, at the famous Battle of *Cannæ*, where the *Romans* ſuffered a total defeat by the *Carthaginians*, the greatneſs of the Victory was eſtimated by this (as *Livy* obſerves) that more than a buſhel of Rings were taken by the Conquerors from the Hands of the ſlain, whereby it appeared how many principal *Romans* and perſons of Quality fell in the Battle. And thus the Father's putting a Ring on his Son, ſhould ſignify in the general, his reinſtating him in the quality and honour of a Son: But S. *Jerom*, S. *Auſtin*, S. *Chryſoſtom*, *Theophylact* and others, conſider here more particularly, that a principal uſe of the Ring was for Sealing, as commonly bearing the image, impreſs, or cognizance of him that wore it, and conſequently they apply this paſſage in the myſtical ſenſe to the gift of the Holy Ghoſt: S. *Chryſoſtom* expreſſes it thus; Δότε μοι δακτύλιον εἰς χεῖρα αὐτοῦ, ἵνα φορῇ τὸ ἀρραβῶνα τοῦ πνεύματος, καὶ φορῶν αὐτὸν φρουρηθῇ ὑπ' αὐτοῦ πανταχόθεν· ἵνα δὲ ἐμοὶ σφραγὶδα φέρειν φοβερὸς ᾖ πᾶσι τοῖς πολεμίοις, ἵνα πέρασιν φαίνῃ τοιοῦτος παῖδος ὢν υἱός, *Give my Son a Ring alſo, that he may have the earneſt of the Holy Spirit, and carrying that about him, may be kept in ſafe-guard by it; that bearing my ſignet, he may both become formidable to all his enemies, and publickly appear the Son of ſuch a Father.* And this interpretation is the more natural, becauſe this is the uſual method of God's favours, that after he hath juſtified, then he further ſanctifies, and for the completion of that gives his Holy Spirit.

It was the ſaying of one of the Ancients, that man is, Ἀφορμὴ Θεοῦ καὶ Δαιμόνων, *The wager which God and the Devil contend about*: But when a Man hath given himſelf up to ſenſuality, or any kind of ſin, then the title is decided, and ſuch a perſon becomes the Devil's peculiar; and on the contrary,

contrary, when he ſincerely addicts himſelf to vertue, God recovers his right, and takes poſſeſſion of him by his holy ſpirit: agreeably hereunto we read, Epheſ. 1. 13. *After ye believed, ye were ſealed with the Holy Spirit, of promiſe*: and alſo 2 Cor. 1. 22. *Who hath alſo ſealed us, and given us the earneſt of the Spirit*: and again Eph. 4. 30. *Grieve not the Holy Spirit, whereby ye are ſealed unto the day of redemption.* For the more clear underſtanding of which, we are to take notice, that God doth employ his holy Spirit about men before converſion, and in order to it; ſo Gen. 6. 3. he is ſaid by his Spirit to have *ſtriven with the old world*; and after that in like manner with his ancient people the *Jews*, for *Iſa.* 63. 10. they are ſaid to *have vexed his holy Spirit*, and in general to all ſorts of men both *Jew* and *Gentile*, eſpecially ſuch as have been baptized into Chriſtianity, the Holy Spirit applies it ſelf, awakening Conſcience, ſuggeſting good thoughts, and giving check to their courſe of ſin, inſomuch that whatſoever degree or beginnings of good there is in any man, the Spirit is the firſt mover of it. For as no good can come but from God, ſo it is not reaſonable to think that there is any man ſo deſpiſed by God, but that ſome overtures of good have been made to him; nor is it worthy of God to imagine, that this good Spirit doth quite abandon any Man upon whom it hath begun to work, till ſuch perſon hath reſiſted, quenched, grieved, and at laſt drove it away from him. But this is not that addreſs of the Holy Spirit which we are conſidering of, theſe are only the motions or viſits which he vouchſafes to make (*pendente lite*, or) whilſt it is yet undetermined, to whom men will ultimately belong. That therefore which we are concerned about is the peculiar

privilege

privilege of very good men, ſuch as have cheriſhed the motions, entertained the viſits, and complied with the intimations of the Holy Spirit; and when it is come to that, from thenceforth he doth not viſit them *in tranſitu* only, or call upon them, but reſides and inhabits with them, and becomes as it were a conſtant principle, a Soul of their Souls: in ſhort, they are the *temples of the Holy Ghoſt.*

This I take to be that which our Saviour means, Jo. 14. 23. *If any man love me he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him*; and that alſo S. *John* in the name of our Saviour, Rev. 3. 20. *Behold I ſtand at the door and knock*, (which phraſe ſignifies the previous and more ordinary motions of his grace) *And if any man open to me, (i. e.* if men attend to my admonitions and invitations, and break off their cuſtom of ſin which bars the door of their Souls againſt me) *then I will come in, and ſup with him*, &c. *(i. e.* then I will be a familiar gueſt, or inhabitant with him) and this is both interpreted and confirmed by S. *Paul*, 1 Cor. 3. 16. *Know ye not that ye are the Temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? i. e.* being ſanctified and made fit for the reſidence of that Heavenly Gueſt, he hath taken poſſeſſion of you as his Houſe and Temple: and more expreſly yet by S. *John* 1 Ep. 3. 24. *He that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him and he in him: and hereby we know that he abideth with us by his Spirit which he hath given us.*

§. II. Now this inhabitation or reſidence of the Holy Spirit is called a Seal, and men are ſaid to be ſealed by the Holy Spirit becauſe as ſeals uſe to denote propriety, ſo God hereby marks out as it were

were ſuch men for his own; *i. e.* as thoſe that he hath a peculiar concern about, thoſe that have an intereſt in him and he in them; and this is of wonderful comfort and advantage, eſpecially in theſe four reſpects.

1. The Spirit thus inhabiting men, gives them a title not only to God's care and Providence, but to an inheritance of Sons, to a participation of that unſpeakable felicity wherewith himſelf is eternally happy and glorious. So the Apoſtle concludes in the forementioned place, Eph. 1. 13, 14. *After ye believed ye were ſealed with the Holy Spirit of promiſe, which is the earneſt of our inheritance until the time of the purchaſed poſſeſſion. q. d.* We are hereby aſſured of Heaven and glory hereafter, though we are not yet in poſſeſſion of it, or, this is the pledge of our adoption, upon which the inheritance is entailed. Hence it is that the ſame Apoſtle, *Rom.* 8. 11. makes this an aſſured argument of our reſurrection; *But if the Spirit of him that raiſed Jeſus from the dead dwell in you, he that raiſed Jeſus from the dead ſhall alſo quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. q. d.* You cannot lie under the power of death and the bonds of the grave, but God will aſſert you to life and immortality, becauſe you have a principle of life, the Holy Spirit in you, which will as ſurely revive you, as it raiſed *Jeſus* from the dead; for by his reſidence in you, you are marked out as belonging to God, and thereby he hath taken poſſeſſion of you for himſelf.

When God owned the Tabernacle amongſt the *Jews* built by *Moſes*, and after that the Temple built by *Solomon*, and Solemnly dedicated to him, for his Houſe or Palace wherein to dwell amongſt that people, it pleaſed him as it were to take livery and

and ſeiſin, by the cloud which on the behalf of the Divine Majeſty hovered over them, and was therefore not improperly called by the *Jews* the *Shechinah*, or *dwelling preſence*; and God was ſaid to *dwell between the Cherubims*, becauſe there this ſymbol of the divine preſence ſubſiſted. And as in the Chriſtian Church all thoſe miracles which the Primitive Chriſtians were enabled to perform, were principally to aſſure their minds that God owned them; and altho they were deſtitute of human help, and perſecuted both by *Jews* and *Gentiles*, yet God was with them, in which reſpect the Holy Ghoſt is called *the Comforter* ſo often by our Saviour; I ſay, in thoſe miraculous effuſions of the Holy Spirit, the cloud as it were ſate over the mercy-ſeat in the Chriſtian Church, which was now departed from the Temple of the *Jews*, and denoted the collection of believers, both of *Jews* and *Gentiles* united under *Chriſt Jeſus*, to be now God's peculiar Houſhold and Family: So alſo to all holy men in all Ages God is preſent by his Spirit, by which they become *Temples of the Holy Ghoſt*; upon which the Apoſtle pronounces peremptorily, *Rom.* 8. 9. *If any man have not the Spirit of Chriſt, he is none of his.* Which I underſtand in this Senſe, *q. d.* He is not arrived at the excellent ſtate of Chriſtianity, that hath not experience of the reſidence of God's Holy Spirit in him.

Only this is to be remembred, that this reſidence of the Holy Spirit in good men which we ſpeak of, is not to be judged of by miraculous effects, nor are ſuch to be expected now, becauſe thoſe were proper only for the firſt Ages, when whilſt the Church was under perſecuting Emperors, and in its infancy, God thought fit by ſuch prodi-

prodigious diſplays of his power and preſence to make all the world ſee his concern for it; and that (as I ſaid before) he had taken poſſeſſion of it: but ordinarily, and eſpecially in the caſe of private Chriſtians, the preſence of the Spirit with them, diſcovers it ſelf by ſuch effects as theſe following. For

2. The Spirit of God, though he doth not work miracles now, yet doth he not meerly take up his reſidence in the hearts of holy men, but actuates them, prompts them forward in all good Actions, helps and ſtrengthens them in their duty, and inflames their reſolution and zeal in all brave and generous enterprizes; in reſpect of which we are ſaid to be *led by the Spirit, to live and walk in the Spirit.* Which is not ſo to be underſtood as if what good was done, the Spirit did it for men; nor much leſs, as if he hurried men on whenſoever they did well, and ſo for defect of ſuch motion were liable to bear the blame of their irregularities when they did evil; for as on the one ſide he never moves but to that which is certainly good and agreeable to the ſtanding rules of Scripture and natural reaſon, ſo neither on the other hand, when he incites to any ſuch thing doth he over-power men, but he raiſes and actuates their native powers; removes impediments, cures their ſloth; and in ſhort, concurring with them, helps their infirmities; with which agrees that forementioned obſervation of *Cicero*, *Nunquam vir magnus ſine afflatu divino, That there never was a brave Hero, nor any admirable performance without divine influence.*

3. The

3. The Holy Spirit reſiding in the Souls of good men is alſo a ſpirit of confirmation, ſetling and eſtabliſhing their *Souls* againſt revolt and apoſtaſie, and giving a kind of angelical ſtedfaſtneſs to them, that ill examples ſhall not draw them aſide, nor temptations prevail upon them; neither inſinuations of falſe doctrine ſtagger them, nor proſperity and the blandiſhments of the world debauch them, nor afflictions and perſecutions ſhake their conſtancy: for they are now *built upon a rock; and though the rains deſcend, and the waves riſe, and the winds blow, they ſtand immoveable*; or as S. *John* expreſſes it, *Rev.* 3. 12. they having overcome and obtained the reward of being under the conduct of this Holy Spirit, are now *made pillars of the temple of God, and ſhall go no more out.* To which add that of S. *Peter*, 1 Ep. 1. 5. *They are* φρουρούμενοι, *kept* (in Garriſon) *by the power of God through faith unto ſalvation.*

A great Example hereof we have in S. *Peter*, who truſting to inherent ſtrength, fell ſhamefully and denied his Maſter; but after that he had received the Holy Ghoſt, he ſtood firm as the Rock on which Chriſt's Church was built.

4. Beſides all which in the laſt place, it is uſual with the Holy Spirit to fill the hearts of thoſe holy men he inhabits with inexpreſſible joy, giving them the foretaſts of the bleſſedneſs which they expect to enjoy hereafter; inſomuch that they do not altogether live by faith (which is their uſual *viaticum*) but in ſome meaſure by ſenſe alſo, having a preſent glimpſe of their future happineſs, by means whereof they *rejoice with joy unſpeakable and full of glory*; they exult, triumph and applaud themſelves in their intereſt in God, and their glorious portion with him.

The Holy Spirit carries men as God did *Moſes* up to Mount *Piſgah*, to take a view of the good Land of promiſe, and affords them the prelibati-

ons of Heaven; the very reliſh of which bleſſedneſs upon their ſpirits puts them into a kind of ecſtaſy, that they feel not the troubles and vexations which may aſſault them from below; they triumph over mortality it ſelf, and wiſh and long to die: when (like S. *Stephen*) *they ſee Heaven opened, and Jeſus ſitting at the right hand of God*, their face (like his) ſhines, and a glory incircles them; they ſeem to hear bleſſed the Quire of Angels, and are ready to join in the Allelujah: in ſhort, their Soul raiſes it ſelf, and would fain take Wing and fly thither preſently.

This I think is that which is figuratively but excellently ſet forth by our Saviour in his Epiſtle to the Church of *Pergamos*, Rev. 2. 17. *To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden Manna.* *Manna* was called Angels food, and as the *Jews* obſerve, it applied it ſelf to every man's palate, and had that reliſh which every man deſired: which admirably expreſſes the joys of Heaven, which are for the preſent the entertainment of Angels; and when Men come to enjoy them, ſhall fill all their powers, and leave no deſire unſatisfied: And it is called *hidden manna*, becauſe (as ſaith the Apoſtle) *it doth not yet appear what we ſhall be*: however, it ſeems ſome taſte and anticipations of this ſhall thoſe have in the mean time who overcome. But that which I principally intend is the next words, *And I will give him a white ſtone with a new name written upon it, which no man knows but he that receiveth it.* This paſſage ſome take to be an alluſion to the cuſtom at *Athens*, and ſome other Greek Common-wealths; where in capital cauſes eſpecially, the Citizens gave their Suffrages by White and Black Stones; and when the number of White Stones was greateſt, the perſon at the Bar

Bar was abſolved or acquitted. And thus the *white ſtone* in the Text ſhould in the myſtical ſenſe import juſtification and pardon of ſin. But this comes not up to the deſign of the place: and there is another cuſtom which fits it better, and moſt probably was here alluded to by our Saviour; (*viz.*) it was in uſe that thoſe which conquered at the *Olympick* Games, had a token or ticket given them, expreſſing their names, and ſpecifying the reward they were to have for their atchievements. In conformity to which our Saviour here ſeems to promiſe to thoſe who acquit themſelves manfully and bravely in the conflict, or race of Chriſtianity, that they ſhall receive an inward and inviſible pledge and aſſurance of the glorious rewards in the other world; which can be nothing elſe but this which we are ſpeaking of, namely, the comforts of the Holy Ghoſt.

This is now the ſecond Boon which our Heavenly Father beſtows upon the Son he receives, and is a very great and glorious one. This is the admirable effect of our Saviour's Aſcenſion into Heaven: the accompliſhment of his promiſe, and the ſupply of his own preſence to his ſervants till he take them up to himſelf. This is the glory of Chriſtian Religion, that whenſoever it is vigorouſly purſued, it yields this preſent advantage beſides whatever is in reverſion. And this is the mightieſt incouragement to men to be generouſly good.

And although things of this nature partly becauſe they are meerly divine favours, not naturally due to men, and ſo cannot be proved by reaſon; partly alſo being in their own nature inviſible and tranſacted in ſecret, cannot be underſtood by the generality of Men who have no part nor lot in

this matter, but are apt to be looked upon as dreams and fancies (if not vain-glorious pretences and forgeries) yet that this we have been ſpeaking of is a great reality there can be no doubt, unleſs we will reject both the teſtimony of God and the experience of the beſt of men; ſo that it may juſtly ſeem either unneceſſary or fruitleſs to add any thing to what hath been already ſaid on this point.

Notwithſtanding, becauſe I obſerve that there are two things which prejudice the minds of a great many Men in this buſineſs, I will endeavour briefly to remove them, and then paſs on.

The firſt is grounded upon an obſervation that ſeveral good men have experience of no ſuch matter; *i. e.* they are neither ſenſible of ſuch a reſidence of the Holy Ghoſt in them, nor of any ſuch raviſhing comforts as are pretended to accompany ſuch a glorious Gueſt: and therefore they are apt to ſuſpect either all is fancy, or at beſt that it is only ſome great rarity not the common portion of God's Children.

Again, they obſerve that not only many good Men are without pretences to the Spirit, but many evil men lay claim to it, and therewith frequently cheat themſelves; and beſides, countenance their evil deſigns by it, and under that pretence do a great deal the more miſchief in the World. Therefore though they do not doubt but that God might think fit at the firſt planting of the Goſpel to give his Holy Spirit as aforeſaid, becauſe upon many accounts there was then extraordinary neceſſity for it; and alſo the Spirit then given was ſo plainly miraculous, and gave ſuch proof of it ſelf, that there could be no ſuſpicion of cheat in the caſe: yet foraſmuch as both theſe things fail now,

now, (*viz.* both the occaſion and the diſcrimination) they think it ſafer to reject all ſuch pretenſions, than admitting them, to lay open a way for ſo much cheating and impoſture as may be reaſonably expected, when there is no certain way of detecting it.

Now therefore if in the firſt place I can give a plain account how it may come to paſs, that ſuch Men as are ſuppoſed in the firſt objection may be deſtitute of ſuch advantages of the Holy Spirit as we have aſſerted to be the tokens of his reſidence; and then ſecondly, if I ſhew alſo how to prevent all impoſture, by diſtinguiſhing the operations of the Spirit from fancy and other alluſions, then both the objections will be anſwered, and the Reader will not be offended with the digreſſion.

§. III. And to diſpatch all briefly, I begin with the firſt, to which I ſay, That as it is not uſual with God to precipitate or prevent the courſe of natural cauſes, but to bleſs and ſucceed them in their due and proper order; ſo neither in his eſpecial providence, or in the acts of his grace, doth he delight to work *per ſaltum*, but gradually, according to the condition of the ſubject, and its fitneſs to receive his impreſſions: accordingly though he be always ready to beſtow his Spirit, with all the comforts and advantages thereof; yet he expects and requires all due qualifications and preparations before he confer it. Now there are theſe three eſpecial qualifications for the reception of the Holy Ghoſt in the ſenſe we ſpeak of.

1. (As I have intimated already) that a man be not only purged from groſſer pollutions, and begin to have a love of holineſs, but that he be ſingularly pure, ſo as at leaſt not to admit of any

voluntary transgression, and especially be above all sensuality of what kind soever. It is observable in that sad miscarriage of *David* (which we have often had occasion to refer to) that it made him justly fear, and therefore earnestly pray, *Psal.* 51. that God would not thereupon *take his Holy Spirit from him*; and the Apostle when he is earnestly perswading the *Ephesians*, *Not to grieve the Holy Spirit, whereby they were seal'd to the day of redemption*, Eph. 4.30. solemnly warns them in the Verse before, *That no corrupt* (or obscene and filthy) *communication proceed out of their mouths*, as that which would assuredly argue their hearts to be no temple for the Holy Ghost; and again, in the verse after the aforesaid Exhortation, he with the same earnestness gives them caution *against all bitterness, and wrath, and clamour*, &c. as intimating that those also defiled the Soul, and made it incapable of receiving the blessed Spirit. To which purpose the *Jews* have a common saying, *Super animum turbidum non requiescit Spiritus Sanctus, That the Spirit of God requires a sedate even temper as his quiet habitation.*

2. The Spirit of God requires a lovely, sweet and benign frame of Spirit, and abhors that *Hypochondriack* sourness and austerity, which yet some place a great deal of Religion in; when men will be always sighing and complaining, and peevishly refuse consolation. *Jonah* confidently told God *he did well to be angry*; and so these men seem to think they please God by grieving his Spirit, frowardly or at least phantastically resisting his consolations. But it is a mighty mistake to think the Spirit of God will comfort men whether they will or no; he requires a perswadeable, counsellable temper, and such a disposition as will work with him; for to make a black melancholist comfortable immediately,

ly, is not to be done but by a phrenzy or a miracle, and for this laſt we are not to expect it now at God's hands: nay even the Prophet *Eliſha*, when he deſired to call up the Spirit of Prophecy, called for an Harp, that he might put is mind in tune, and diſpoſe himſelf to become the inſtrument of the Spirit of God; and ſo it is here, an harmonious Soul added to the former qualification invites down the Spirit of God. Eſpecially if 2 Kings 3. 15.

3. In the third place there be fervent Prayer joined herewith; for ſince God expects we ſhould make our acknowledgments of him, and demonſtrate the value we have of the mercy we ſeek by the importunity of our addreſſes to him, even then when we addreſs our ſelves to him for common favours; with much leſs reaſon can we expect that he ſhould beſtow this great boon upon us, unleſs it be ſought by ardent and inſtant Prayer: for ſo our Saviour hath told us, *Luke* 11. 13. that though he hath a Fatherly affection to give all good things to us, yet it is upon condition that *we ask him.* And S. *James* hath further explained to us the manner of asking, *Chap.* 1. 6, 7. that it *muſt be in faith without wavering*; i. e. neither as doubtfull of God's goodneſs, nor as if we were indifferent whether he granted our requeſt or not; for (ſaith he) *Let not ſuch a man think that he ſhall receive any thing at the hand of the Lord.*

Now foraſmuch as the comfortable portion of the Holy Spirit is not intailed upon all the Children which God receives to grace and pardon, but that all theſe qualifications are pre-required; ſince it is alſo evident that ſome who perhaps may paſſionately deſire it, yet have an unhappy temper that unfits them for the entertainment of this Heavenly Gueſt; and many others that have ſome good mea-

ſure of ſincerity, which God will mercifully accept in order to eternal life, are not yet raiſed to ſuch a meaſure of holineſs as to be capable of this favour at the preſent: It cannot ſeem ſtrange that ſuch ſhould remain ſtrangers to this moſt happy privilege, nor can it yet be reaſonable that their want of experience of it ſhould be any argument that there is no ſuch thing to be expected.

§. IV. But then for the other difficulty, (*viz.*) how to diſtinguiſh the motion of God's Spirit from either the impreſſions of *Satan*, or the reſults of a man's own temper and conſtitution; I anſwer there are theſe properties of the Holy Spirit, which if they be attended to and laid together, will infallibly diſtinguiſh it from any other motion, and ſecure us from all alluſion.

1. The Spirit of God never moves any man but in an action or courſe warrantable by the word of God: for ſince the Holy Scripture is given for a rule of our actions, and as ſuch confirmed in the moſt ample manner by the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit ſhould notoriouſly contradict it ſelf, if it ſhould contradict that.

Indeed, in former Ages whilſt the mind of God was not intirely delivered, and conſigned in holy Writ, there were frequent intimations of his pleaſure by his ſpirit of Prophecy to ſupply that defect, and ſeveral ſpecial directions given upon emergencies; but then alſo it is to be obſerved, that ſuch extraordinary interpoſitions were attended with miraculous circumſtances, and thereby brought their credentials along with them, and gave aſſurance of their divine authority: but now thoſe miraculous atteſtations being ceaſed, as well as the reaſon of them, whatſoever pretends to God, and

and is contrary to the Holy Scripture, is an illuſion of the Devil. *To the Law, and to the Teſtimony, if they ſpeak not according to this Rule, it is becauſe there is no light in them*, Iſa. 8. 20.

Secondly, the motions of the Holy Spirit particularly in comforting the hearts of holy men, are rational and accountable, and conſequently of that are alſo even and conſtant. It is very ordinary for ſome men to be ſometimes marvellouſly caſt down they know not for what, and then raiſed up again they know not how, and this they ignorantly call the acceſſion and receſſes of the Holy Spirit, or a *Plerophory*, and a ſtate of deſertion. Whilſt there is nothing to alter the caſe, no change in themſelves, neither of apoſtaſie from God, nor of improvement in piety, yet their ſtate of mind is altered, as if God changed, and not themſelves.

But it is quite otherwiſe with the Holy Spirit, that never cauſleſly withdraws from men; it never grieves thoſe who have not firſt grieved it, nor doth it arbitrarily give joy and conſolation to the minds of men, but upon juſt ground and foundations, when there is a root and cauſe of it within, in their own Conſciences. So *Eraſmus* well obſerves upon that paſſage of the Apoſtle, Rom. 8. 16. *The Spirit witneſſeth with our Spirits, that we are the Sons of God.* Συμμαρτυρεῖ, *Ut intelligas* (ſaith he) *geminum eſſe teſtimonium duorum Spirituum noſtri & Dei*, &c. *The Spirit doth not comfort againſt the ſenſe of our Conſciences, but concurs with, and confirms the teſtimony of our own ſpirit; ſo that we may ſee, and underſtand, and can give account of our own joys.* And conſequently of this, theſe comforts are not flaſhy and uncertain, but ſtable and certain; like thoſe effects that proceed from known and certain cauſes. The joy of ſuch men

men is not a blaze like a meteor, but *as the ſhining light which ſhineth more and more unto the perfect day*, Prov. 4. 18. But on the contrary, thoſe that have their ebbings and flowings, their ſudden and unaccountable dejections, and their as ſudden ecſtaſies and tranſports, very unworthily impute theſe motions to the Holy Spirit, which are only fits of the body, and the ſeveral diſguiſes of hypochondriack paſſions.

Thirdly, the Spirit of God in all its impreſſions upon Men is gentle, ſedate, and governable; puts not Men into a rage, nor diſorders their reaſon, but is manageable by it, ſubmits to all *decorum*, and complies with all decency of circumſtances. This is that which is thought by the beſt Interpreters to be the meaning of that remarkable paſſage of the Apoſtle to the *Corinthians*, 1 Ep. Ch. 14. verſ. 29, 30, 32, 33. *Let the Prophets ſpeak two or three, and let the reſt judge. If any thing be revealed to another that ſitteth by, let the firſt hold his peace. For the ſpirits of the Prophets are ſubject to the Prophets. For God is not the author of confuſion, but of peace*, &c. *i. e.* (ſaith the Learned D. *H. Hammond*) even in thoſe effuſions of the Holy Ghoſt, and in the exerciſe of thoſe extraordinary gifts, you may obſerve method and order. *For the afflations or inſpirations of the Prophets, here ſpoken of may be ruled by the Prophets*, i. e. *by them that have them*; *theſe Chriſtian gifts being not like the afflations of evil ſpirits, which put men into ecſtaſies*, &c. *for the Spirit of God is not a violent, ecſtatical, impetuous, but a ſoft, quiet ſpirit*, &c. And if it was ſo in thoſe extraordinary impulſes in the primitive times, much more muſt it needs be ſo now, when all thoſe miraculous and prodigious circumſtances, are ceaſed as I ſaid before.

Therefore

Therefore wherever Men pretending to the Spirit, are raving and furious, and pervert all order and government, or whereſoever ſuch perſons ſhall under ſuch pretences thruſt themſelves into the Miniſtry, or put the Magiſtrate out of office, ſhall take upon them to be reformers of the world, revile authority, run upon deſperate attempts, or in ſhort, where-ever there is a *raging whirlwind* inſtead of a *ſtill ſoft voice*, God is not there, but either the Devil, or at leaſt a Phrenzy. And ſo much for that.

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CHAP.

## CHAP. IV.

Of the great honour God doth to a true Penitent, putting himſelf into his ſervice, and the peculiar uſefulneſs of ſuch a perſon.

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§. IV. *The Character of an accompliſhed Chriſtian according to all the ornaments forementioned.*

§. I. WE come now to the Third Ornament which the Father inveſts his returned Son with, *He puts Shooes on his Feet*, which were the habit not of Slaves, but of Free-men, as we have noted before; but what is the myſtical ſenſe of this paſſage, or what favour on God's part towards penitent ſinners is hereby denoted, is not altogether ſo eaſie to reſolve upon: S. *Chryſoſtom*, and *Theophylact*, underſtand hereby the Grace of God, which defends the Convert from the temptations of the Devil; *Put Shooes on his feet* (ſaith the former) *that the old Serpent may not find him naked*

*naked ſo as to wound his heel, and that he may be able to tread upon the ſerpent's head, and have no diſturbance in running the way of God's commandments*: But S. *Jerom*, and S. *Auſtin* apprehend, that hereby is ſignified the honour that is put upon eminent Converts, to be employed by God as uſeful inſtruments of propagating his Goſpel, and of drawing in others from the evil of their ways to ſubmiſſion and obedience. To this purpoſe S. *Jerom* applies that circumſtance of the paſſover, that it was to be eaten *with ſtaves in their hands, and ſhooes on their feet*, as well as with *bitter herbs*; as if the myſtical reach of that injunction was to teach us, that a Man delivered by the mighty power of God's grace out of *Ægypt*, (the ſtate of ſervility to ſin and *Satan*,) ſhould not only ſolemnize the memorial of God's mercy with a ſorrowful and bitter reflection upon his former folly and miſery, but ſtand (as in *procinctu*) ready to run on God's errand, and to call in others to him. And indeed, this ſame Metaphor is uſed in that very ſenſe (according to the judgment of the beſt interpreters,) Eph. 6. 16. *Having your feet ſhod with the preparation of the Goſpel of peace*, which ſeems to allude to that paſſage of the prophet *Iſaiah* 52. 7. *How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the Goſpel of peace*; and the intent of the Apoſtle ſeems to be to injoin a readineſs to promote and ſet forward the Chriſtian Religion. And in this ſenſe I take it here, that when God hath pardoned a ſinner, and ſanctified and adopted him, he then fits him for his ſervice, employs him in it, and expects from him that he become uſeful towards the reclaiming of others.

Phil. II. *of* Sp. *D. of* Alva.

A great Prince of the laſt Age had upon ſome diſpleaſure caſt an old Captain and a potent Miniſter of his into Priſon, where he continued a long time without any hopes of reſtitution; until at length it happened that the great Monarch having projected the adjoining a Neighbour Kingdom to his own Dominions, thought none ſo fit to execute his deſign as the perſon he had long kept under a reſtraint; him therefore he ſends for out of priſon, Pardons him, and Commiſſions him for ſo great an affair, and found the ſucceſs of his Courage and Conduct according to his own deſires. It is not eaſie to ſay whether this action argued more the wiſdom of the Prince, (who knew who was fitteſt for his turn, and could alſo ſubmit his own paſſion to his intereſt;) or whether it was a ſign of the neceſſity of his affairs, and of the ſcarcity of expert and able ſervants; but it is certain it was a glorious teſtimony to the gallantry of him he ſo employed.

Now though it be moſt evident that God ſtands in need of no man for the execution of his deſigns, yet it is as certain that in all the inſtances of his providence he loves to employ the capacities of his Creatures, and it is the greateſt honour any of them are capable of to be ſo made uſe of by him.

And as for rational Beings who were at firſt deſigned, and admirably fitted for his Service, (as well as ſingularly obliged by innumerable favours to be faithful to his intereſt,) and yet have forfeited their allegiance and ſerved againſt him: it is an inſtance of the moſt wonderful goodneſs that he ſhould truſt them again; for it was very much to forgive them, but to truſt them, when (as I have noted heretofore,) it is become a rule of Wiſdom amongſt them not to truſt one another in ſuch a caſe,

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is very admirable: and yet God doth both theſe, and more than all this; for he pardons his ingrateful Rebels, he fits them for ſervice, and then truſts them. Nay, it is oftentimes the aim of Princes when they employ one in any eminent ſervice that hath been formerly faulty, to expoſe him to ſuch difficulties, as that the hazard of the employment ſhall either revenge the former miſcarriage, or at leaſt make him dearly earn his reſtitution to favour. But God as he hath no ends of his own, nor ſeeks any thing from them he endeavours to reclaim, but their own good and happineſs; ſo in thoſe he employs in any expedition, he peculiarly aims at their honour and comfort therein.

When a Man of God came to old *Eli* the Prieſt to threaten him and his Sons with the Effects of God's ſevere diſpleaſure for their prophaneneſs, and the ſcandal they gave to his ſervice: he expreſſes it in theſe words, *Them that honour me, I will honour; and they that deſpiſe me ſhall be lightly eſteemed.* The import of which compared with the context plainly amounted to this, that as it was the higheſt honour and dignity to be admitted to, and to continue in a relation of ſervice to God, ſo it was the greateſt debaſement (which that Family ſhould undergo) to be thruſt from it. 1 Sam. 2. 30.

The Prodigal Son in the Text (as we have ſeen) acknowledges his unworthineſs to be called any more a Son, and deſires to be admitted but into the loweſt rank of *Servants*, and into ſo mean a condition, as that he was ſo far from expecting any honour by it, that he thought himſelf incapable of any truſt; but the Father honours him with the higheſt relation of a Son, and God honours penitent Sinners with the moſt weighty and important truſt, putting ſhooes on their feet; *i. e.* employ-

employing them in his Vineyard. S. *Paul* had a mighty ſenſe of this, 1 *Tim.* 1. 12. and breaks out into a paſſionate adoration of the divine goodneſs, *I thank Chriſt Jeſus our Lord who hath inabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the miniſtry, who was before a blaſphemer*, &c.

But we are not to underſtand any thing of this that hath been now ſaid, as if all Converts were to be imployed as God's Miniſters in the publick diſpenſation of the Goſpel; for God doth not give to all ſuch thoſe peculiar abilities which are requiſite to the diſcharge of it, nor are all perſons competent judges of the neceſſary qualifications thereunto; and therefore it is made a ſpecial office by God, which no man may undertake, but either he that is called thereto miraculouſly by God himſelf, (as the firſt publiſhers of the Goſpel were) or by the orderly approbation and conſecration of the Church; (as hath been the conſtant practice ever ſince.) All therefore that is hereby intended is partly to remark the tranſcendent goodneſs of God to his penitent Children, in that he is pleaſed to paſs ſuch a perfect act of oblivion of all their former enormities, as that he diſdains not to admit even ſome of them to this higheſt truſt and employment, (all their former demerits notwithſtanſting,) as we have had inſtance in S. *Paul*; but principally to recommend it to the care and Conſcience of all thoſe whom God hath been pleaſed to pardon, (that though they may not invade the office of the Miniſtry, yet) they ought to think themſelves concerned to uſe their utmoſt indeavours (within their ſphere) to be inſtruments of ſpiritual good to others.

This

This ſeems to be the meaning of that charge of our Saviour to S. *Peter*, Luke 22. 32. *Thou when thou art converted ſtrengthen thy Brethren.* Or if that be liable to exception, yet that of King *David* is not, *Pſal.* 51. 13. who vows it as the fruit of his own pardon, that *then he would teach God's way unto ſinners, and tranſgreſſours ſhould be converted unto him.*

It is certain Religion never proſpers well in the World whilſt doing good is thought to be the office of ſome certain perſons only, and not the common concern of all good men; nor will it ever be a good World till men think themſelves obliged to be as Charitable to the Souls of men as to an Oxe or an Aſs, and be as ready to help them out of the ſnare of the Devil, as the other out of a Ditch. And if it ſhould happen that a Prieſt and a Levite ſhould paſs by a man faln amongſt Thieves and wounded, yet ſure every good Samaritan will have compaſſion on him, and bind up his wounds; eſpecially he that hath been formerly a great Sinner himſelf, and hath known by ſad experience the deplorableneſs of that condition, and found mercy at God's hands: (methinks) ſuch a perſon ſhould with warm affections and tender bowels, awaken that man into an apprehenſion of his danger, who is in the Condition he himſelf hath eſcaped, and encourage him to try thoſe mercies of God which he himſelf hath experimented. For if either a righteous man *that never needed repentance*, (*i. e.* ſuch a change of his whole ſtate as we have been ſpeaking of) ſhould be leſs ſenſible of ſuch a man's caſe; or eſpecially if a proud ſelf-applauding Phariſee deſpiſe him, yet it will by no means become a Convert to be without compaſſion. For beſides all other arguments to this purpoſe, it may be ſuch

a man may have just cause to consider whether his own example (when he did go on in the way of sin) had not that pernicious contagion as to infect or confirm this man in his wickedness, which he sees him now lie under, and then it will not be only Charity but Justice which will oblige him to this Duty.

It was the Opinion (if I remember rightly) of S. *Basil*, that in Hell the torments of the damned are daily increased in proportion as the evil seed of their corrupt doctrine, (or the evil example) which they sowed whilst they were alive, fructifies upon Earth; but whether that be so or no, it is certain Men's sins are aggravated by the mischief they do to others, as well as by other circumstances; and therefore every such Penitent as we speak of, must think it his duty and concern, to indeavour to hinder the propagation of sin, and to stop the infection in others, as well as to destroy the malignity of it in himself.

§. II. Now there are many ways which an honest heart will find out of doing this we are recommending, without taking upon him to be a Preacher; *Solomon* tells us, *A wicked man speaketh with his feet, and teacheth with his fingers:* that is, though he say nothing with his lips, all his life and actions do teach and instruct the world in wickedness: and there is no question but that holy men may most effectually recommend vertue to others by their own practice and example. Example (1.) insinuates gently, works insensibly, but powerfully, (as almost all great Engines do;) (2.) it relieves mens modesty, and yet shames their sloth; it (3.) kindles emulation, (4.) presses upon ingenuity, (5.) recommends the excellency,

*Prov.* 6. 13.

lency, (6.) convinces the neceſſity, (7.) demonſtrates the poſſibility of vertue. (8.) Beſides, that there are a great many of the moſt curious lines thereof that are not to be deſcribed by the pencil, or that can be expreſſed by words, but are to be obſerved in the life and converſation of good men. For this reaſon (amongſt others) it pleaſed God to ſend our Saviour, not only to preach the divine life to the World, but to live and converſe with men, that by his example he might more plainly convince them of it; and for this cauſe alſo we ſolemnly thank God for the examples of all holy men that have gone before us.

And beſides example, there are many opportunities and advantages, which good men have of propagating a ſenſe of Piety and Religion, ſuch as the authority of Parents, influence of Benefactors, intereſt of Relations, convenience of travelling together, Society of Commerce, and all other Bonds of Converſation. Every of which a mind inflamed with the love of God, and compaſſion to the Souls of men, will find uſeful to this purpoſe. And this was the courſe *Moſes* adviſed *Iſrael* for the keeping up a ſenſe of God and his Laws in their minds, and the propagation of it to poſterity. Deut. 6. 6, 7. *Theſe words which I command thee this day ſhall be in thine heart, and thou ſhalt teach them diligently to thy Children, and ſhalt talk of them when thou ſitteſt in thine Houſe, and when thou walkeſt by the way, and when thou lieſt down, and when thou riſeſt up*, &c.

And for the incouragement of all good men in this buſineſs, beſides the great honour it is to be ſubſervient to God in ſo important an affair, and beſides the unſpeakable comfort to our own Conſciences, *If by converting a ſinner from the*

*evil of his way we ſave a Soul from death, and cover a multitude of ſins*, Jam. 5. 20. and that by ſuch an act of zeal we have alſo the happineſs to efface our own former miſcarriages: Beſides all this (I ſay) in preſent, we ſhall alſo advance our own glory and Crown hereafter; for in the words of the Prophet *Daniel*, *They that be wiſe ſhall ſhine as the brightneſs of the Firmament; and they that turn many to righteouſneſs, as the Stars for ever and ever*, Daniel 12. 3.

It were very eaſie to inlarge on this ſubject, but that which is moſt pertinent, and the peculiar conſideration of this place, is, to ſhew the particular aptneſs of thoſe, that have themſelves been converted from a wicked life, to be inſtrumental of recovering others, which I will briefly give account of in the following Particulars, and ſo diſmiſs this point. And in order to this,

§. III. In the firſt place, it is conſiderable that thoſe that are of ſickly conſtitutions, are generally obſerved to be more pitiful and compaſſionate to the infirm, than thoſe robuſt and healthy perſons that ſcarce ever knew what ſickneſs meant; and thoſe that have long languiſhed under any painful infirmity, and at laſt have recovered, are both the beſt able, and moſt willing, to give advice to others under the ſame diſtemper. Upon which account it hath been the cuſtom of ſome Nations (who had no profeſſed Phyſicians) to bring their ſick out into the Market-place (where all perſons that came were obliged by Law to take notice of them,) that by this means the experience of one that had eſcaped a diſeaſe, might afford a relief to him that now laboured under it. And ſo it is reaſonable to think, that thoſe who have

*Babylonii ap. Herodot. in Clio.*

have been ſick in ſin, and of ſin heretofore, muſt needs by their own experience know the baits that allure Men, the charms that bewitch them, the fallacies of *Satan* that impoſe upon them, the folly and perverſeneſs that defixes Men in that unhappy eſtate; the workings of paſſion, the regret of Conſcience, the thoughts and reaſonings, the objections, the prejudices, and the very inſide of other Men in that condition. And therefore, as God commands *Iſrael*, Exod. 23. 9. *Thou ſhalt not oppreſs a ſtranger, for ye know the heart of a ſtranger, ſeeing ye were ſtrangers in the land of Ægypt:* i. e. they knew what injuries, oppreſſions, inſolencies and affronts a ſtranger was expoſed to; and what fears, anxieties, and jealouſies, he muſt needs be always under; and therefore it having been their own caſe, they ought to think it reaſonable to pity ſuch: ſo in the preſent caſe, the Convert is furniſhed both with more obſervations to render him ſerviceable to the converſion of Souls, and more compaſſion to apply and make uſe of his experience to that end.

Therefore S. *Paul*, though he was execrated of his own Countrymen, becauſe he forſook *Moſes* to follow *Chriſt*, yet ſhewed more dexterity in refuting their prejudices, and more tenderneſs to their Souls than any other Apoſtle: and particularly *Rom.* 9. 1, 2, 3. he expreſſes himſelf thus. *I ſay the truth in Chriſt, I lye not, my conſcience alſo bearing me witneſs in the Holy Ghoſt, that I have great ſorrow and heavineſs in my heart. For I could wiſh that my ſelf were accurſed from Chriſt for my Brethren, my Kinſmen, according to the fleſh*, &c. Where whatever he mean by the expreſſion *of being accurſed from Chriſt*, he certainly deſcribes the deepeſt compaſſion that a mortal breaſt is capable of; and

that he had a ſenſe of this towards his Brethren, he confirms by the moſt ſolemn Oath that can be made. I need not here add (becauſe I have touched that before) that ſuch perſons are alſo filled uſually with the greateſt zeal of God's glory (whom they have formerly diſhonoured,) and the greateſt indignation againſt ſin, (by which they have been abuſed,) and think themſelves obliged to a double diligence, by the conſideration of their former diſſervice, of all which S. *Paul* is alſo an example, 1 Cor. 15. 10. *I laboured more abundantly than all the reſt*, &c. But I obſerve

In the ſecond place, ſuch Perſons as have been formerly notorious for a courſe of wickedneſs, and now are become ſincerely good and vertuous, are a ſtanding reproof of the folly of ſin; nay, I may call them the very credential Letters of vertue, and convincing arguments of the neceſſity of converſion, and ſuch as ſtrangely awaken men to conſider their own ſtation.

Simpl. *in Epict.* It was a very good Plea that the Platoniſt makes for Vertue in theſe words. Ὅτι ἡδυτέρα δοκεῖ ἡ σωφροσύνη τῷ σπεδαίῳ ἤπερ ἡ ἀκολασία τῷ μοχθηρῷ, δηλοῖ τὸ πολλὰς μὲν ἤδη μοχθηρῶν εἰς σώφρονας μεταβάλλειν, τὰς δὲ σώφρονας μηδέποτε μεταπίπτειν εἰς ἀκολασίαν, &c. *That the ways of vertue are more pleaſant to a good man, than the ways of ſin and licentiouſneſs are to an evil and vicious man (and therefore more amiable and better in themſelves) appears* (ſaith he) *by this, that ſeveral men who have taſted all the pleaſures of ſin forſake it, and come over to vertue; but there is ſcarce an inſtance to be found of the man that had well experimented the delights of vertue, that ever could be drawn off from it, or find in his heart to fall back to his former courſe.* But to ſee a man that had ran into all exceſs of riot, to tack about to a quite

quite contrary courſe, from a Drunkard, to become ſober; from laſcivious to become chaſte and modeſt; from a covetous perſon to become charitable; from prophaneneſs, to ſet himſelf to read and ſtudy the Scripture; and from curſing and blaſpheming, to bleſs and pray: and this change to be wrought in health and ſtrength, without the check of a Sick-bed, or the dreadful apprehenſions of approaching death: I ſay, this ſpectacle cannot but be a moſt convincing argument of the neceſſity of repentance to all ſuch as are yet *in the gall of bitterneſs, and under the bonds of iniquity.*

Laſtly, (to ſay no more) ſuch perſons ſo changed as aforeſaid, are ſtanding Monuments of the divine mercy, and of the powers of the Goſpel, and irrefragable arguments of the poſſibility of recovering the greateſt ſinners, if they be not wanting to themſelves, or rather if they do not chuſe their own deſtruction. For they proclaim aloud the greatneſs of the divine goodneſs, the largeneſs of his heart, the openneſs of his arms; and they upbraid the ſinner of folly, of madneſs, of cruelty to himſelf if yet he perſevere. It is ſaid *Miltiades* Trophies would not ſuffer *Themiſtocles* to ſleep; and *Caſar*'s thoughts continually upbraided him with the great exploits *Alexander* had effected in a few years. But when a ſinner ſhall obſerve ſuch a man that was as fooliſh as himſelf, to become wiſe and ſober; one that ran in the ſame race, and was as near the Pit of Hell as he, eſcaped, and himſelf ſtill upon the brink of it; when I ſay, he ſhall conſider, that ſuch a man that had all the temptations, pretences, excuſes, examples, and every other inſtance of debauchment that himſelf hath, to find juſt reaſon to break through thoſe obſtacles, and by the mercy of God to be

ſaved, and as a *fire-brand plucked out of the fire*, certainly if any thing in the World can move him, this muſt make him look about him.

In the Sixteenth Chapter of this Goſpel, our Saviour introduces a certain rich man in Hell, interceeding with *Abraham* that *Lazarus* might be ſent from the dead to preach repentance to his five Brethren, ſuppoſing that though they would not hearken to *Moſes* and the Prophets, yet ſuch a ſpectacle, and ſo certain intelligence from the infernal Regions, muſt needs rouze them: Father *Abraham* denied his requeſt, and (God doth not uſe to gratifie ſuch curioſity.) But indeed, if a man conſider well, it is almoſt the ſame thing, when God affords us an example of a man that was dead in treſpaſſes and ſins, and under the very torments of Hell in his Conſcience, but now redeemed and recovered by the grace of God, and ſends him to preach repentance to us. And I think I may ſay in this caſe as the aforementioned *Simplicius* ſaid of the diſcourſes of *Epictetus*, Εἴτις ὑπὸ τούτων μὴ πάσχῃ τῶν λόγων, ὑπὸ μόνων τῶν ἐν ᾅδου δικαστηρίων ὑπευθυνθείη. i. e. *The man that is incorrigible under ſuch a powerful remedy, there is nothing but the very torments of the damned can work upon him.* And ſo much alſo for that point.

Simp. *in Præf. ad Epict.*

§. IV. We have now ſeen ſeverally the three Ornaments the Father puts upon his returning Son, and the favours God beſtows upon a ſincere Convert repreſented by the *Beſt Robe, a Ring on his Hand, Shooes on his Feet.* Let us now take a view of them all together; let us I ſay, make a ſtand a little, and ſee the Son in all his new attire; I mean, let us ſuppoſe all theſe favours of God beſtowed upon ſome pardoned ſinner, and then take notice

notice what a brave and excellent perſon ſuch a man will be.

It was a noble Character which the Hiſtorian gives of Marcus Cato, *homo virtuti ſimillimus, & per omnia diis quàm hominibus propior; qui nunquam rectè fecit ut facere videretur, ſed quia aliter facere non potuit.* Cato (ſaith he) *was Vertue drawn to the life, and the reſemblance was ſo exact, that it was hard to ſay whether vertue animated* Cato, *or* Cato *gave ſubſiſtence and viſibility to vertue; nay, ſuch was the unſhaken greatneſs of his mind, and the purity of his life, that he ſeemed more to participate of divine perfection than of humane frailty: for he was both ſo far above all temptations of doing evil, and alſo free from the allay of mean ends and deſigns in doing good, that it ſeemed a kind of neceſſity of nature in him to do well.* This was bravely ſaid, had it not been ſomewhat too Romantick. But the man we are ſpeaking of (under the aforeſaid qualifications) muſt as much out-go *Cato*, as he outſtripped other men; or rather as much as the advantages of Chriſtianity out-went thoſe of Philoſophy. For this man is not only improved by humane diſcourſe, but raiſed by divine revelation, and governed by the wiſdom of God; is not under the faint and fluctuating hopes which reaſon can ſuggeſt, but under the aſſurances of faith; is not only eminent for ſome one or more vertues, but being inflamed by the love of God, and the proſpect of Heaven, he breaths nothing but greatneſs and glory; wherever he goes, God is in his heart, Heaven is in his Eye, joy in his Countenance; and he ſpreads the ſweet odours of Piety, and caſts a luſtre upon Religion.

Vell. Paterc. *Hiſt.* lib. 2.

*A brief deſcription of a perfect Chriſtian.*

For

For in the firſt place, he is ſanctified throughout, the Image of God is reſtored upon him, and *Chriſt Jeſus* formed in him. All the maims of his fall are cured, the confuſion of his powers rectified, the tyranny of cuſtom vanquiſhed, his Conſcience is inlightned, his reaſon raiſed, his paſſions ſubdued, his will ſet right, and all the inferiour powers obedient. Vertue is made natural, eaſie and delightful to him, and it is *his meat and drink to do the will of his Heavenly Father.*

Furthermore, to aſſure his ſtation, he is confirmed by the grace of God, and upheld by divine power; he is the peculiar care of God's Providence, the ſpecial charge of the holy Angels, and the Temple of the bleſſed Spirit; all God's diſpenſations provide for his ſafety, conſider his ſtrength, and work for his good. The Devil is ſo reſtrained that he ſhall not *tempt him above what he ſhall be able to bear*, and hath not ſo little wit with his great malice, to attempt where he is ſure to be foiled. Perſecutions may aſſault him, and flatteries may undermine him; proſperity may indeavour to blow him up, or adverſity to cruſh him down; raillery may go about to ſhame him out of his courſe, or buffoonry to laugh him out of it; but his race is as certain, as that of the Sun, or the Stars in the Firmament, and his foundation ſure as the Mountains, *for he knows whom he hath believed.*

Again, he is adopted a Son of God, and ſealed by the Holy Ghoſt *to the day of redemption*; he feels himſelf quickned by his vital preſence, warmed with his motions, and aſſured by his teſtimony. This erects the *hands that would hang down, and ſtrengthens the feeble knees:* this lifts up his head with joy, becauſe he knows his *redemption draweth nigh.*

*nigh.* Every day he walks, he finds himſelf a days journey nearer Heaven; therefore he ſets his face thitherwards, he puts on the habit, the meen, the joy, the very heart of Heaven: he goes up by contemplation, and views it; he raviſhes his heart with the ſight of it; he falls into a trance with admiration, and when he comes to himſelf again, cries out, *come Lord Jeſus, come quickly.* He needs nothing, he fears nothing, he deſpiſes the World: life is tedious, death is welcome, *to be diſſolved and to be with Chriſt is beſt of all.*

What can trouble him that hath peace in his Conſcience? what can diſturb him that hath Heaven before him? what can diſmay him that is ſecure of immortality? what can affright him whom death cannot hurt? and what can deject him that is ſure of a Crown of Glory?

And laſtly, no wonder if after all this, ſuch a man be active and vigorous for God, if he be uſed by God, and become his Embaſſador, *beſeeching men in Chriſt's ſtead to be reconciled to God.* For all thoſe comforts and incouragements afore-mentioned inlarge his Soul like an Angel, put Wings upon him like a Cherub, and ſet him on fire like one of the Seraphims, with holy zeal of God's glory and the good of men. Therefore with *David* he tells the unbelieving World *what God hath done for his Soul*; and with his Lord and Maſter *Chriſt Jeſus, he goes about doing good*; and in this flame of holy love is contented to offer up himſelf a *ſacrifice of a ſweet ſmell to God.*

Here is *adulta virtus*, Religion and Piety at their higheſt pitch and fulleſt maturity that is attainable in this World; the next ſtep is Heaven, one degree more commences Glory. Let the envious World now (if they dare) reproach Religion

gion as Hypocriſie, or as meer pretences and great words; when they obſerve that this glorious ſtate is the deſign and the attainment of it, whenever it is wiſely and worthily proſecuted; or let them ſay, all this is impoſſible, who as *Tully* well expreſſes it, *Ex ſua ignavia & inertia, & non ex ipſa virtutis robore exiſtimant.* Theſe things are no Romances, nor have I dreſſed up any Legendary *Hero*: the things are true and real; *Thus ſhall it be done to the man whom God delights to honour.* All this hath been attained, and might be attained again, would Men but ceaſe to take up an opinion of their own goodneſs from the extream badneſs of others, and take their meaſures rather from the rules, and motives, and aſſiſtances of the Goſpel, than from the examples and cuſtoms of the World; then without doubt others beſides S. *Paul* might be able to ſay, *I have fought the good fight; I have finiſhed my courſe, I have kept the faith, from henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteouſneſs, which the Lord the righteous Judge ſhall give me at that day, and not to me only, but to all them alſo that love his appearing,* 2 Tim. 4. 7, 8. And that brings me to the laſt inſtance of the Father's kindneſs, and the top of that glory which God beſtows upon truly good men.

CHAP.

# CHAP. V.

## The Splendid Entertainment, or the Joys of Heaven.

S. *Luke* Chap. 15. Verſ. 23.

*And bring hither the fatted Calf, and kill it, and let us eat and be merry.*

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§. I. *The peculiar intendment of this paſſage of the Parable. That by the feaſt upon the fatted Calf are repreſented the joys of Heaven.*

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§. III. *A more plain and literal account of the felicities of the other world; eſpecially in four particulars.*

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4. *The bleſſed preſence of God and our Saviour, and the happy ſociety of Angels and Saints.*

§. I. IT was thought to be a juſt civility amongſt the more ſoft and voluptuous Nations (eſpecially thoſe of the Eaſt) that thoſe who were to be the Gueſts at a Feaſt ſhould be as curious in the preparation of themſelves for the ſolemnity, as he that *Vide* Stuckium *de Conviv. lib* 2. *cap.* 24.

that made the entertainment was for their accommodation; and for that cauſe uſually a conſiderable time of notice was given them before-hand, that they might be in ſuch circumſtances as ſhould both do honour to him that invited them, and alſo render them grateful to all the ſociety: upon which account, they were wont to bathe, anoint, exerciſe, and perfume themſelves before-hand: and amongſt other curioſities, to put on a habit which was both ſumptuous, and ſignificant of reſpect. Agreeable whereunto is that paſſage in the Goſpel, *Mat.* 22. 11. where the Maſter of the Feaſt takes it extream ill of one of his gueſts, that he appeared there *not having on a wedding garment.* And with this accords the contrivance of this Parable; for the Father having (as we have ſeen) put his Son into a fitting garb, now proceeds to his entertainment; which is the third and laſt expreſſion of his reconciliation. *Bring hither* (ſaith he) *the fatted Calf*, &c.

That he intends a Feaſt for joy of the recovery of his loſt Son is very plain, wherein he deſigns that all his Family ſhall bear a part with him; the fatted Calf being the ancient moſt ſumptuous treatment, as appears *Gen.* 18. 7. for therewith *Abraham* ſolemnly entertained the three Angels that came to viſit him in the habit of way-faring men; and as the afore-named *Stuckius*, and the learned *Bochart* obſerve, there was not a Feaſt of old times, eſpecially amongſt thoſe mentioned by *Homer*, where this was not the principal Diſh: and the Text lays the Emphaſis of a double Article upon it here in the Parable. But what is myſtically meant by this paſſage, or what peculiar favour of God to penitent ſinners our Saviour intends hereby to expreſs, is not very eaſie to determine.

In

In the foregoing Particulars we have had the concurrent opinion of the Fathers for the countenance of our applications; but here I doubt we shall be deserted by them, and therefore if we walk alone must proceed the more warily.

The Ancients agree in the general, that hereby is to be understood the great and inestimable gift of our Lord *Jesus Christ*. Ποῖον μόχν λέγει, σιτευτὸν (saith S. *Chrysostom*) ὃν ἡ δάμαλις Μαρία παρθένος ἐγέννησεν, &c. *What fatted Calf doth the Father call for? What but his only Son born of the Virgin Mary*, &c. And in like manner the rest, only with this difference, that S. *Chrysostom* especially applies it to the Sacrifice of *Christ* represented in the Sacrament, and S. *Austin* to the same *Christ Jesus* preached in the Gospel; but with the leave of such great men, it may perhaps seem reasonable to pitch upon another interpretation, namely, that hereby is meant the joys and glories of the Kingdom of Heaven; for the confirmation of which I offer these following considerations.

First, it is well enough known that the *Jews* had commonly such a crass notion of the happiness of the world to come; as to think it to consist in the pleasures of the Body, and particularly of eating and drinking; agreeable to which is the Fable amongst them of *Behemoth* and *Leviathan*, the one a prodigious Beast, and the other a Fish: which together with great quantities of delicious wine, they report to be laid in store by God, for the entertainments of the life to come; which ridiculous conceit of theirs seems to have given countenance, if not rise, to the sensual Paradise of the *Mahometans*, and some of the Eastern Nations. And though *Menasseh-Ben-Israel*, a late learned *Jew*, endeavours to mince the matter, and to

Menasseh-Ben-Isr. *de Resurrect. lib.3.cap.9.*

to turn the ſtory into an Allegory, yet he confeſſes, and ſtrongly contends, that a great part of the Paradiſiacal felicity muſt conſiſt in the pleaſures of eating and drinking. Now it is no ſtrange thing to imagin, that our Saviour ſpeaking to the *Jews*, ſhould make uſe of their own language, and allude to their cuſtoms and conceits, how groſs ſoever they were.

And that he did ſo, will be the more probable if in the ſecond place we conſider, that he compares the Kingdom of Heaven to a Feaſt, *Matt.* 2. 22. that he tells his Diſciples he will *drink no more of the fruit of the vine till he drink it new with them in his Father's Kingdom*, Matt. 26. 29. and allowed the expreſſion of him that eſteemed it to be the greateſt bleſſedneſs *to eat bread in the Kingdom of Heaven*, Luke 14. 15.

Thirdly, even in this very Chapter, our Saviour telling us there is joy in Heaven at the Converſion of a Sinner, *verſ.* 7. and amongſt the holy Angels, *verſ.* 10. he by thoſe expreſſions invites and leads our thoughts to this ſenſe, and in this very Parable, *verſ.* 25. the entertainment of the Penitent is expreſſed as accompanied with dancing and mirth; by all which, he ſeems to give us ſufficient ground to think the entertainment we are now ſpeaking of is no other than that of the joys of Heaven.

But eſpecially if we obſerve in the laſt place, that the order of the Parable requires ſuch a ſenſe of theſe words as this we have ſuggeſted. For according to the Scheme of the Parable, God having been hitherto repreſented, as beſtowing all thoſe favours and bleſſings upon the Penitent, which render him fit for, and capable of Heaven, (as we have ſeen already) what can now follow more properly,

perly, or what would one expect to be intimated in the next place, but that he ſhould thenceforward be deſcribed conferring that happineſs, and actually placing him in that ſtate he had by all his former unſpeakable favours, made way for. Beſides, God's giving his Son is the foundation of all his other favours, and our Saviour's giving himſelf for us, is the meritorious and procuring cauſe of juſtification, adoption, ſanctification; the giving of the Holy Ghoſt, and all the great things forementioned; and therefore it would not be agreeable to the wiſdom of our Saviour in the contrivance of this ſcene, to repreſent this in the laſt place, when all thoſe benefits which flow from it had before been ſuppoſed to be conferred. This therefore upon the whole matter ſeems to be the intent of our Saviour in the words we are upon, to perſonate our Heavenly Father, Crowning all thoſe former gifts he had beſtowed upon ſincere Converts in this life, with glory and bleſſedneſs, and the joys of Heaven, in the Concluſion. As if in the literal ſenſe the Father of the Prodigal Son had ſaid, "I remember the miſery, the hunger, and hard-"ſhip my Son hath endured; and I pitied him, "even then when he well deſerved all he ſuffered; "but ſince the time that I have ſeen him return-"ing, not only the pale looks, ſharp Countenance, "dejected Eyes, and all other arguments of his "former Calamities which I have obſerved in him, "run in my mind, but I think alſo of the con-"flicts he hath had with himſelf upon the point "of returning; fear turning him back, and hope "incouraging him to go on; and the latter with "great difficulty vanquiſhing the former: methinks "I ſee the anguiſh of his mind, his indignation a-"gainſt himſelf, his ſhame for his own folly, and

" the awful reverence he had of my preſence, be-
" tween all which I know how his heart panted
" and laboured, till at laſt the reviving ſenſe of his
" duty, and the confidence in the benignity of a
" Father carried him through. And now that he
" is returned, it is not fit to heap ſorrow upon ſor-
" row, I will wipe away all his tears, and repair
" all his ſufferings; he ſhall take his fill of refreſh-
" ment, not only my heart but my hand, my purſe
" all my ſtores are open to him. I have forgotten
" his rebellion, and he ſhall forget his ſorrows;
" he hath by this laſt act effaced the memory of
" what he had done, and I will take care there
" ſhall remain no marks of what he ſuffered; and
" becauſe all my family heretofore ſorrowed for
" him, they ſhall all now rejoyce with me and
" him. Enter O Son into thy Fathers joy; reap
" now the fruits of thy repentance; I am ſatisfied
" with thy return, ſatisfy thy ſelf in this, that
" all I have, and all that belong to me, ſhall ſpeak
" thy welcome.

Or as if in the myſtical ſenſe our Heavenly Fa-
ther ſhould thus beſpeak his penitent Children:
" I am ſenſible as well as you what Husks you
" have lived upon ſince you forſook me, and when
" you neither loved me nor your ſelves, I pitied
" you; it was a long time before you would un-
" derſtand, that in forſaking me you departed from
" your own happineſs; and now that you have
" believed that it was good for you to return, you
" ſhall not find your ſelves deceived, your own
" experience ſhall juſtify your choice; you came
" indeed late into my Vineyard, yet I will re-
" ward you equally with thoſe who have born the
" burden and heat of the day; and though it was
" a great while before you would be perſwaded

" over

"over to my ſide, yet now having acquitted your "ſelves well I will crown you. I have already "ſet ſome marks of favour upon you, but thoſe "are but earneſts of greater which I intend you; "and that you may be ſure I ſought not my ſelf "but you, when I put the task upon you of living "vertuouſly and holily, it ſhall now appear, that "I only educated and trained you up in that "School for glory. And now that I have by "theſe preparations fitted you for it, enter into "the joy of your Lord; you ſhall not have only "the ornaments but the inheritance of Sons, and "ſhall partake of the ſame bleſſedneſs which my "moſt dutifull Children (that never went aſtray "from me) and which I my ſelf am happy in, "Iſa. 25. 6. *For in this mountain will I make unto "all my ſervants a feaſt of fat things, a feaſt of "wines on the Lees; of fat things full of marrow, "of wines on the Lees well refined*, &c. Come ye "bleſſed, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you, "live with Saints and Angels, and rejoyce with "them to all Eternity.

§. II. But to render this interpretation of this paſſage in the Parable the more clear and ſatisfactory, and alſo to make way for ſome account of the admirable greatneſs of this favour; let us take a little compaſs, and in the next place conſider the ſeveral phraſes that the ſtate of cœleſtial happineſs is expreſſed by in Scripture; and the moſt remarkable are theſe four: it is called Paradiſe, a Reſt, a City, a Kingdom.

In the firſt place it is deſcribed under the notion of *Paradiſe*, which imports a Garden of Pleaſure; and this name took its riſe from that place and condition in which Almighty God ſetled our firſt Pa- Luk. 23. 43. 2 Cor. 12. 3.

rents, when they came immediately out of his hands; and as there he had ordered all things to be at hand which miniſtred either to Man's neceſſity or delight, and had fenced him from all that could diſturb and annoy him; ſo it is here, but in a far higher degree both of gratification and ſecurity, as we ſhall ſee by and by.

2. It is called a Reſt, Hebr. 4. 9. *There remaineth a reſt for the people of God*; alluding to the Land of *Canaan*, where God gave the Children of *Iſrael* reſt and quiet habitation after a long ſervitude in *Ægypt*, and a tedious Pilgrimage through the Wilderneſs. So in the World to come, God gives all good Men repoſe from all the troubles of life, and from all the ſolicitation and diſturbances of their Enemies of all kinds, Rev. 14. 13. *Bleſſed are the dead which die in the Lord for they reſt from their labours*, &c.

3. It is called a City, Hebr. 11. 10. *A City which hath foundations, whoſe builder and maker is God.* In oppoſition to that temporary and flitting accommodation which the Children of *Iſrael* had in the Wilderneſs; and to note the ſtability and perpetuity of the ſtate of thoſe that have finiſhed their courſe, and attained the Crown of Immortal Life.

4. It is alſo called a Kingdom, Matt. 25. 34. *Come ye bleſſed of my Father, inherit a Kingdom*, &c. Principally as a Kingdom ſpeaks grandeur, and glory, and affluence of all things, far beyond the reach and capacity of a private fortune; and ſo in the World to come, God hath prepared and accumulated all the ingredients of felicity and glory.

Now with all theſe figurative repreſentations of the ſtate of happineſs in the World to come doth this

this in the Text of a Feaſt very well accord, ſetting out the ſame thing in like manner by the entertainment of the ſenſes, wherein according to the notion of it, not only the greateſt delicacies, and the greateſt plenty of them are implied, but alſo order, and joy, and unanimity in thoſe that partake of them, which together marvellouſly well repreſent that felicity we ſpeak of.

Τὸ φαγεῖν Σύμβολόν ἐστι τροφῆς ψυχικῆς, τρέφεται ἀναλήψει καλῶν, &c. Phil. Jud. *de Alleg.*

To ſpeak fully and clearly about that Eſtate is beyond the ability of any mortal man: for beſides that the Apoſtle hath told us, 1 Cor. 2. 9. *Eye hath not ſeen nor ear heard, neither hath it entred into the heart of man to conceive what God hath prepared for thoſe that love him*; It is obvious to conſider, that infinite goodneſs and wiſdom may eaſily contrive ſuch inſtances of happineſs, as ſurpaſs our underſtanding, till we come to enjoy them; ſince he can neither raiſe up new objects to entertain thoſe faculties, we have, or create new powers in our Souls, which ſhall be able to diſcover freſh and more quick and admirable delights than any we are now capable of; eſpecially when he ſets himſelf to make demonſtration of his magnificence, and of the miracles of his love: and therefore we may very well ſurceaſe our curioſity, and reſt our ſelves contented, ſince we have both aſſurance of ſuch a thing in general, and of the greatneſs and compleatneſs thereof: notwithſtanding, becauſe ſome knowledge of particulars alſo, will marvellouſly quicken us in our race thither, and ſupport us under the burdens we muſt undergo in the mean time; therefore I will by the guidance of the Scripture, lay down theſe Four particulars touching that Eſtate.

§. III. In the firſt place, it is that which the Holy Scripture inſiſts upon as a principal ingredient of the happineſs of the other World; that whereas death had made a ſeparation of Soul and Body, and (whatever circumſtances the former might be conceived to be in the mean time, yet) the latter lay under the power of the Grave, and was the ſpoil and triumph of the Prince of Darkneſs; now by the wonderful power of the Almighty, this is raiſed up again out of its own Aſhes, or out of whatever more deſperate Eſtate it might ſeem to be in, and united to the Soul its old inmate again, that ſo the whole man may be happy. This is a point of felicity, which as it is not naturally due to men, but depends upon a voluntary act of the divine goodneſs, ſo alſo it can no otherwiſe be proved but by divine Revelation. And thoſe that were deſtitute of that light (whatever raiſed apprehenſions they might have of future rewards, and the happineſs of the other life) could never with all their Philoſophy make any diſcovery of this: nay, it was ſo far out of the rode of their thoughts, that it is a well known ſtory of *Syneſius* (who for his Learning and Piety was made of a Philoſopher a Chriſtian Biſhop) that he confeſſed his Philoſophy repreſented this point as utterly incredible to him; upon which account, he deſired to be excuſed that dignity in the Church; and for the generality of the greateſt *Pagan* Wits, they laughed at and derided this Doctrine when it was preached by the Apoſtles. And indeed, the thing it ſelf is ſo very wonderful, that had we not the plain and infallible promiſe of him to whom nothing is impoſſible, and therewithal a ſatisfaction to our reaſon, that he that could bring all things out of nothing

Acts 17. 18. 32.

thing at firſt, may well be ſuppoſed able to effect other things alſo above our apprehenſion; it would ſtagger Chriſtian Faith it ſelf to aſſent to it: therefore for the manner of doing it, we muſt leave that to him; but for the matter, it is (as I ſaid) as certain as divine teſtimony can make it, and being believed is of unſpeakable conſolation.

For what can be more comfortable than to be aſſerted from the power of the Grave, and reſcued from death and mortality, to have our Soul refitted with Organs, and all the bodily powers awakened again ſo as to loſe nothing by our fall; when death ſhall like a faithfull depoſitory, reſtore us our whole ſelves perfect and intire? Is not the Spring very pleaſant after a ſharp and ſevere Winter, wherein though the ſeeds of all things have been preſerved, yet they have been benummed and rendred inactive; wherein the Heavens frowned, the Sea wrinkled her face, and the Earth grew effete and barren; as if her youth was over: to ſee now God renewing the face of all things, rendring them their wonted vigour, and cloathing them with their former verdure; to obſerve the Sea ſmoothing her brow, the Fields ſmile, every thing gay and glorious, and Heaven and Earth ſinging by way of *Anthipone's*, to each other in praiſe of their great Creator; and in a word, whole Nature triumphing as in a reſurrection from the dead? But now to ſee man after Diſeaſes had acted all their ſpite upon him, and death had defloured his beauty and bound up all his powers, and the Grave had held him long in poſſeſſion, wherein his Body had undergone a thouſand changes, from fleſh to Earth, from Earth to Graſs, from Graſs to the ſubſtance of this or that Beaſt, *&c.* and after all this to ſee him reſtored again freſh and glo-

rious, ſprightly and vigorous *like a Gyant refreſhed with wine*, and this ſame Body to be united to its proper Spirit, by more firm and indiſſoluble ligaments, and be again uſefull for all its offices and purpoſes; how happy muſt this meeting, how great muſt this joy be! and not much unlike that we had lately before us in the Parable, when the long ſorrowfull and indulgent Father recovers his loſt and deplored Son.

I do not doubt but that the Souls of men when they are ſeparated from their Bodies, are able to underſtand and perform ſome of their moſt proper and ſpiritual functions; for I ſee no reaſon why the Soul ſhould ſo much depend upon matter, as to be utterly inactive without it; eſpecially when I conſider that whilſt we are in the Body we govern it, preſcribe to it, deny it, expoſe it to hardſhip, and ſometimes act directly croſs to the intereſt of it; and beſides this, we find that there are ſome things which our mind takes notice of, which the bodily faculties could give no intelligence of, and other things which our mind apprehends at firſt, before the exerciſe of any Faculty at all, as in firſt Principles, *&c.* All which (were it neceſſary to inſiſt upon that point now) would afford ſufficient arguments to convince the miſtake of thoſe that aſſert the ſleep of the Soul during its ſtate of Separation. Nay, I make no queſtion but that the Souls of good men are in the actual perception and enjoyment of ſome meaſures of happineſs before the Reſurrection; for beſides, that if it were not ſo, it would very much abate their joys here, and ſo be apt to take off the edge of their endeavours, but moſt certainly it would marvellouſly glue men to this life, and make them extreamly unwilling to die; beſides this I ſay, and all other arguments of that

that nature, the holy Scripture is ſo clear and expreſs in ſeveral places touching this point, that a man may almoſt with as good confidence deny the World to come as disbelieve this.

Amongſt the reſt I will only offer theſe two paſſages to the Readers conſideration; (*viz.*) *Phil.* 1. 21, 22. and 2 *Cor.* 5. 1, 4. In the firſt the Apoſtle ſpeaks on this wiſe, *I am in a ſtrait betwixt two, having a deſire to depart and to be with Chriſt, which is far better. Nevertheleſs, to abide in the fleſh is more needful for you, q. d.* I cannot tell whether to deſire to live longer or to die ſooner, being preſt with arguments on both ſides; for if I conſult my ſelf and my own good, it is doubtleſs better for me to die, and to enter preſently into happineſs; but then if I conſult your convenience, it were better I ſhould live longer in the World, to be ſerviceable to your edification. Now (I think) it is evident, that if the Apoſtle could have ſuppoſed that he ſhould have entered into a ſtate of ſilence after death, and not preſently been in the fruition of bliſs; there could have been no ſtrait in the caſe, nor any diſpute but that it was better to live ſtill in the World, and continue in the comforts of a good Conſcience, and of doing good to others, rather than to fall into a ſtate of inſenſibility and inactivity.

In the other place the ſame Apoſtle expreſſes himſelf thus. *For we know that if this earthly houſe of our tabernacle were diſſolved, we have a building of God, an houſe not made with hands, but eternal in the Heavens. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan being burdened, not that we would be uncloathed but cloathed upon, that mortality may be ſwallowed up of life. q. d.* We are well aſſured that from ſuch time as theſe Bodies of ours are diſſolved

ved by death, which were intended but as Tents or Tabernacles for our ſhort and temporary reſidence, thence-forward we ſhall be in a more ſetled ſtate of life and happineſs. And that's the reaſon why we groan and deſire to die, not meerly becauſe we are weary of our ſtation, and impatient of this preſent life, but becauſe we have then hope to be forthwith in a far better coudition, being put into an unalterable eſtate of life.

Notwithſtanding the truth of all which, it would nevertheleſs be uncomfortable to good men, if they had not a proſpect of the union of their Souls again with their Bodies; not only becauſe few Men are ſo metaphyſical as to have any clear and ſatisfying notion of this ſeparate ſtate; and the moſt of Men (having been always uſed to a Body) would be in fear of loſing their Being, if they were not relieved with the expectation of being united to them again: But principally becauſe it is certain, that however the Soul can exiſt, and perform ſome actions of life without the Organs of the Body, yet it being created in a middle rank between purely ſpiritual and meerly corporeal Beings, and being *apta nata*, fit and ordained to inform a Body, muſt needs have an inclination thereunto, and eſpecially in regard moſt of its accuſtomed actions do require the help of the bodily powers; for though it may underſtand without them, love God, adhere to goodneſs, reflect upon it ſelf, and feel the comforts of a good Conſcience, upon a well-performed life, *&c.* yet it is not intelligible how it can ſee without Eyes, move locally, or apply it ſelf to ſociety without them.

Now foraſmuch as God intends that the whole man ſhould be happy, and compleatly comfortable in the other World, therefore he hath reſolved with

with himſelf, and aſſured us that the Body ſhall be raiſed again, and therefore the Scripture lays ſo much ſtreſs upon the Reſurrection, as if Men's happineſs were adjourned to that great day.

To which this is alſo to be added, that the Bodies we then are incouraged to expect, will be, as the Apoſtle calls them, *Spiritual Bodies*; that is, raiſed and ſublimed from this droſſy feculency, freed from ſickneſs, pain, wearineſs, hunger, heavineſs, and all the other imperfections of groſs matter, and ſo be fit to correſpond with the vigour of the Soul, and the glories of that bleſſed ſtate. In all which together I place the firſt inſtance of the happineſs of the other World, and whoever well conſiders, will find it to be a very great and glorious one. But,

Secondly, Man ſhall not only be reſtored to himſelf, and to all his capacities, but in the World to come there ſhall be the moſt delightful objects and entertainments provided for, and preſented to all his powers, ſo as to employ, fill, and raviſh them. We intimated under the former Head that the powers of the Body ſhould be raiſed and improved, the Body being made ſpiritual and fine, by which means alſo the intellectual powers will be much advanced, having then exterior Organs capable of more generous uſe and imployment: But to have powers inlarged without objects whereupon to imploy, and wherein to delight themſelves, would be a torment inſtead of an happineſs. For the very reaſon of pain and grief lies in nothing elſe, but either that ſome powers are deſtitute of their proper objects, or that the powers and objects are miſmatched and unproportionate to each other: Who will go about to appeaſe hunger with Muſick, or content any one ſenſe with the objects of another; or

or think to ſatisfy the deſires of a Man with the repaſt of a Beaſt? We ſee, both extream little and exceſſively great and glorious objects are alike troubleſome to the Eye, and as well exceſſive joy as grief break and diſturb the mind; all diſcontent and uneaſineſs of Men's ſpirits with their condition is from hence, that ſome power of theirs is either not provided for, or leſs benignly dealt with than it deſires. So that felicity or miſery ariſe neither from the abſolute nature of things, but from their relative conſideration; nor from that meerly, unleſs thoſe things that are relatively good and proper, be alſo proportioned to the capacity of the power that receives and feels them.

Now therefore as the wiſe and good Creator of all things never brought any Creature into being, which he had not fitted with a ſatisfaction in its kind, nor opened any power for which he had not provided proportionable enjoyments; becauſe had he done otherwiſe he had been the Author of evil and miſery, and could not have looked over his works and pronounced of them that *they were good*: So much leſs will he permit that in the other World wherein he intends to make the fulleſt demonſtration of his goodneſs, there ſhould be any inſtance of unhappineſs, by reaſon of defect or diſproportion; or eſpecially that ſuch holy men as he there deſigns to reward for all their faithful adherence and ſervice to him, ſhould have inlarged powers and ſcanty ſatisfactions, but the one anſwerable to the other: agreeably to which it is, that that ſtate is repreſented by a Feaſt, (as we have obſerved already) where care is always taken that there be nothing offenſive to the Gueſts, and that none of the participants may go away without full meaſures of what is deſirable to them; wherewith alſo accord

thoſe

thoſe other expreſſions of Holy Scripture, which deſcribe God as making preparations from the beginning of the World, 1 *Cor.* 2. 9. *Matth.* 25. 34. as we have intimated before.

In conformity to this notion it muſt needs be, that in the Kingdom of Heaven, in the firſt place, the mind of Man will be adorned with a greater meaſure of knowledge and wiſdom than is attainable in this life; partly as it is exerciſed about higher and more noble objects than thoſe we converſe withal here below, partly alſo as it will have a clearer apprehenſion, and quicker perception than it is capable of whilſt it is clouded by the fumes of a groſs Body. Hence it is that the Apoſtle tells us, 1 *Cor.* 13. 12. *Here we ſee through a glaſs darkly, but there we ſhall ſee clearly, as we are ſeen.* There we ſhall contemplate things in themſelves, and in their cauſes, which here we have but a faint reflection of; there we ſhall underſtand all the admirable wiſdom of divine providence, which is here a myſtery to us. Whilſt we were in this World we modeſtly and humbly believed that all things wrought for good, but then we ſhall clearly underſtand the manner thereof: here we have a narrow ſphere, but there we move in a clear and free air, and have a vaſt and unbounded proſpect before us, in which our minds may raviſh themſelves with admiration, and expatiate without bounds or limits. There all the ſecrets of nature, the myſteries of grace, the knots of Theology, and the very *arcana imperii* will be open to us, as being now *interioris admiſſionis* of the Privy Council of Heaven.

And this will be as much more pleaſant than the entertainments of ſenſe are to us now, as the pleaſures of a Man are beyond thoſe of a Beaſt; or the faculty of reaſon is above the powers of the Body.

Body. And although it be too obſervable, that in this World men are commonly more taken with the latter than with the former, it is not becauſe this is greater than that, or comparable to it, but becauſe the generality of men have drowned themſelves in the Body, and ſo loſt all reliſh of intellectual pleaſures; therefore when the Body is refined, and reaſon hath recovered thereby its juſt pre-eminence, and become a true teſt and *criterion* of good and evil, there will an unſpeakable pleaſure flow in this way.

Nor will the delight of the will in the cloſe embraces of true and indubitable goodneſs be leſs raviſhing than that of the mind in the apprehenſion of truth, foraſmuch as the former is as natural to, and as peculiarly the entertainment of the one, as the latter is of the other faculty, and muſt moſt certainly afford ſo much a greater pleaſure, as the will, (which hath a kind of infinity in it ſelf,) muſt conſequently be able to take in more largely of the pleaſure of its object. And now that the man is delivered from the jugling and ſophiſtry of *Satan*, and the falſe light of ſenſe and carnal intereſt, ſo that he apprehends true good in its native beauty, it cannot be but he muſt be more taken with it, than ever he was heretofore with the empty and gilded Pageantry of corporeal delights; for it cannot be doubted but God hath taken care to reconcile every man's duty with his happineſs, and made that beſt for man which he doth moſt peculiarly require of him; and every man will find it ſo when once temptation being removed, he ſingly and ſincerely applies himſelf to the experiment.

And then for Conſcience, or the comfortable reflection upon what hath been done well and vertuouſly.

tuouſly. I need ſay the leſs of that, in regard every man in this life hath experience of the happy effects of it. But alas, in this World oftentimes melancholy of Body ſo much abates the comforts of it, and either dark thoughts of God, or the juſt ſenſe of our own demerits by many miſcarriages in time paſt, do ſo much either diſturb its reaſonings, or weaken its concluſions, that few men know rightly the force of it, and fewer live under the conſtant conſolations thereof. But when men come to Heaven, and ſee God a God of love and goodneſs; find their ſincerity accepted, and their ſins done away; have no cloud of ignorance, nor melancholick panick fear upon them, then they recount with triumph all the difficulties they have conquered, the temptations they have reſiſted, the afflictions they have ſuſtained, the ſelf-denial they have uſed, the vertuous choice they have made, the manly proſecution they have performed, the brave examples they have left behind them, and the many evil ones they deſpiſed and eſcaped; in ſhort, the good they have done, and the evil they have eſchewed; and by all together, the demonſtration they have given of ſincere love and loyalty to God; which affords them a *continual feaſt* within themſelves, and they then *rejoyce with joy unſpeakable and full of glory.*

And then in the laſt place, ſince (as we have ſhewed) the Body it ſelf ſhall be raiſed again and glorified; the meaning is not ſurely, that it ſhall only become an acceſſion to the felicity of the Soul, or be happy by reflection only; but doubtleſs all ſuch bodily powers as are fit to be reſtored in this glorified ſtate of a ſpiritual Body, ſhall be accommodated with their proper and peculiar entertainments: that ſo as that hath been denied and mortified in ſubſer-

ſubſerviency to the intereſt of the Soul in its former ſtate, it may now have its amends here. And whereas it is certain ſome of the more groſs powers of the Body ſhall be laid aſide in this renovation of things, becauſe our Saviour hath told us, that *in the reſurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the Angels of God*: Matt. 22. 30. and the Apoſtle S. *Paul* expreſſes himſelf thus, 1 Cor. 6. 13. *Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats, but God ſhall deſtroy both it and them:* It ſeems therefore not improbable, that as ſome of thoſe offices ſhall ceaſe, ſo others more generous and excellent, ſhall then be diſcovered in their ſtead. And for all thoſe that are reſtored with the Body, they ſhall not be in vain, but have their uſe, their objects, and their delights. The Eyes ſhall probably pleaſe themſelves with delightful proſpects, the Ears be entertained with Harmonies; there ſhall be a kindly and delicious motion of the Spirits, the whole Fabrick ſhall ſhine with light and beauty, and ſhall have a wonderful agility and vigorous motion, ſo as to be able to mount the Heavens, as we know the Body of our Saviour did after his Reſurection. All this, and whatſoever elſe is good, or deſirable, or glorious, or Poſſible, ſhall be the portion of good men in the other World.

To which add, that as that happineſs ſhall be of the whole man, and of all his powers and capacities, and with the higheſt gratifications; ſo that it may be meer ſincere and perfect happineſs indeed, there ſhall be no alloy or mixture of any thing that may give the leaſt trouble or diſturbance; there ſhall be all the inſtances of joy, all the ingredients of felicity, and nothing elſe to the contrary. No ſad circumſtance to imbitter his delights, nothing

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to divert him, or call him off from his enjoyments, no wearineſs to interrupt his proſecutions, nor ſatiety to make the fruition loathſome and tedious; no fear or ſolicitude to abate his delight, no temptation to diſturb or moleſt him, no danger of exceſſes to check and reſtrain him. Here the former Prodigal may now ſwim in the higheſt and moſt generous pleaſures without riot or intemperance; without danger of exhauſting either himſelf or them: in a word, here there is no fatal interchanges and viciſſitudes of good and evil, bitter and ſweet, as is uſual in this World, but ſimple, unmixt, conſtant joy and happineſs.

It was a rare and unparallel'd happineſs of *Quintus Metellus*, of whom it is ſaid, that he had ſuch a benign gale of proſperity conſtantly attended him, that in all the tedious and perillous Voyage of a very long life, he never met with ſtorm nor calm, rock, nor ſhelf, but arrived at his Port in Peace, full of days, and laden with bleſſings. For (ſaith the Hiſtorian) he lived in the greateſt honour and affluence, having had the glory of being Conſul (the higheſt Magiſtracy) of being General of a *Roman* Army, (the higheſt truſt) and of a triumph, (the greateſt honour and felicity.) He lived to ſee his three Sons all arrive at the higheſt dignities and preferments that magnificent State of *Rome* could yield them; his three Daughters all married to the beſt Families: and by all theſe he had a numerous and hopeful Progeny of Grandchildren deſcending from himſelf, and trained up under his Eye. In all his Life there was no other news in his Family but of Weddings, Births, Succeſſes, Jollities and Triumphs; no ſuch thing as a Funeral, Mourning, or any diſaſter all his Days: and all this Crowned with an εὐθανασία, a

Valerius Maximus, *lib.7.cap.1.*

gentle and eaſie death at laſt in the preſence and imbraces of all his deareſt Friends, Children, and Family.

But this (as I ſaid) was a rare and extraordinary Caſe, not to be matched again in all Hiſtory; the common method of Providence in this World is to mingle ſweet with bitter, grief with joy; and ſo light and darkneſs, day and night, proſperity and adverſity intercept and ſucceed each other; he that is now miſerable may expect to be one day happy, and he that is happy now, muſt expect his turn of miſery. It was therefore worthily eſteemed a brave and noble carriage of *Paulus Æmilius*, when he had Conquered and taken Captive the Potent Prince *Perſeus*, after he had gently treated and comforted the unfortunate Prince, he turns himſelf to admoniſh the un-experienced young Men of his Train and Family. *Exemplum inſigne cernitis* (ſaith he) *mutationis rerum humanarum, vobis hæc præcipue dico Juvenes, ideo in ſecundis rebus nihil in quenquam ſuperbe ac violenter conſulere, nec præſenti credere fortunæ, cum quid veſper ferat incertum ſit*, &c. *You ſee here before you* (ſaith he) *a remarkable example of the mutability of humane affairs, a Prince that was lately a terrour to the Roman name now in chains, and at our mercy; learn hereby you young men, that you neither ſuffer your ſelves to be tranſported with pride, nor truſt too much to fortune, ſince you ſee by this ſpectacle what changes a little time may produce.* But moſt memorable of all, and moſt accommodate to my purpoſe, is that carriage of the ſame *Paulus*, when in the midſt of all his glories and ſucceſſes, the news was brought him that his two Sons were dead, he recollected himſelf, and addreſſes himſelf to the People of *Rome* in this ſort: *Mihi quoq; ipſi nimia jam fortuna*

Livy's *hiſt.* l. 45. c. 7.

Ib. *cap.* 41.

*tuna mea, eóq; ſuſpecta eſſe cœpit, & poſtquam omnia ſecundo curſu fluxiſſent, neq; erat quod ultra precarer, illud optavi ut cùm ex ſummo retrò volvi fortuna conſueſcit, mutationem ejus domus mea potiùs quam reſpublica ſentiret,* &c. *I was aware (*ſaith he*) that my fortune was too great to hold on at that rate, and ſince I could not but expect an ebb to ſucceed ſuch a tide, I am glad it hath pleaſed God that the change hath happened in my private family rather than in the publick affairs.*

This great man well underſtood the courſe of this World, in which nothing is ſo certain as uncertainty it ſelf, nothing ſo ſad but hath ſome qualifications or abatements; nothing ſo perfectly happy, but it hath ſome grievous conſequents or appendages. But in thoſe happy Regions we ſpeak of, a conſtant gale breaths always from the ſame point; a man is evenly carried along his courſe, without interruptions and turnings; I ſay, in the World to come only, there is pure and unmixed joy, and there it is in the trueſt and fulleſt meaſures.

Now the reſult of all theſe things together muſt make it a moſt glorious and comfortable eſtate; when a man ſhall arrive at the ſumm of all his wiſhes, when he ſhall not be put to contentment but receive ſatisfaction; not ſhrink himſelf, and contract his mind to his condition, but his Condition be fitted to his mind; when there ſhall not be that thing which is poſſible, and can miniſter any delight, but ſhall be poured out upon him, and that in ſuch full meaſure, as to repleniſh and overflow all his Powers and Capacities; and where his powers ſhall be all inlarged and refined to that very end, that he may receive in more of happineſs, and that of the nobleſt pureſt kind without

mixture or alloy. "O happy and glorious ſtate "of things! O happy day when theſe things ſhall "come to paſs! and moſt happy they that ſhall "be thought worthy of it! Stay my Soul, and "wonder at thy Father's bounty and goodneſs; "raviſh thy ſelf with admiration of theſe glori- "ous preparations for thy entertainment. Look "up hither, and comfort thy ſelf under all the "uncertainties, diſappointments, adverſities, con- "flicts of this life, turn thine eyes this way, and "loath the Husks of ſinful pleaſure; deſpiſe the "unſincere, the gilded hypocritical treatments of "the lower World, trample upon all the glories "of it, and reach after this and haſten hither.

3. But this is not all yet, the joys of Heaven are as laſting as they are great and full. When God hath recovered his loſt Son (as aforeſaid) he ſhall never be loſt again, he ſhall never be miſerable more, he now gives him an inheritance by an indefecible title; *A Crown immortal that fadeth not away, a Kingdom that cannot be ſhaken. A houſe not made with hands, but eternal in the Heavens:* Stronger than the foundations of the Earth, or the Poles of Heaven; for thoſe ſhall be diſſolved, and theſe ſhall melt away with fervent heat, *But thy throne, O God, endureth for ever and ever.*

Let there be never ſo many and great ingredients of felicity otherwiſe, if this be wanting of the duration of it, it anſwers not the deſires of a man, and is very ſhort and defective. For whenever it ſhall expire, it will be as if it never had been; nay, if any ſenſe of things remain afterwards, it is a great aggravation of unhappineſs *fuiſſe fælicem*, that a man hath out-lived his own comforts; and the comparing his preſent deſtitution with his former injoyments, is really a torment to him. Therefore

fore it is obſerved to be the humour of ſome of the wiſeſt Nations, to beſtow as little coſt as they poſſibly can upon feaſting, and the bodily entertainments of eating and drinking, who yet are very ſumptuous and magnificent in buildings, and ſuch other things as are durable, becauſe they conſider thoſe former *periſh in the uſing*. And this is the very argument upon which the Holy Scripture ſlurs all the glories of this World, that τὸ σχῆμα παρέρχεται, the Scene changes; all is but acting a part for a while, and ſhortly the lights are put out, the Curtain drawn, and *ſic tranſit gloria mundi*; in whatever gallantry a man appeared upon the Stage, he muſt retire and be undreſt, and be what he was before; upon which account he muſt be a very vain and ſilly man, who ſo little forethinks what will ſhortly befall him, as to bear himſelf high upon his preſent ornaments. 1 Cor. 7. 31

But it was without doubt a cutting ſaying to the Glutton in the Goſpel; *Son, remember thou haſt had thy good things, and Lazarus evil things; now therefore he is comforted, and thou art tormented.* For although (as we noted before) it be the common Fate of this World that good and evil take their turns, yet moſt certainly the reliſh and remembrance of good things paſt makes the ſucceſſion of evil moſt pungent and intolerable. Nay, which is more, the very fears and expectation of this viciſſitude makes the ſenſe of the greateſt preſent pleaſures flat and inſignificant.

It would queſtionleſs be a great relief to the Souls in Hell, and a remiſſion of their torments, if they could conceive any hopes of emerging at laſt out of that condition; and it would be a great abatement of the joys of Heaven, if any ſuſpicion ſhould enter there, that poſſibly that felicity

licity might one time or other expire. But this is the very Hell of Hell, that there is not the leaſt crany through which to ſpy light beyond thoſe dark Regions; no hopes, but they that come thither are for ever abandoned by God, and made the triumphs of his vengeance. And it is the glory of cœleſtial glory, the Crown of the Heavenly Kingdom that it is eternal, that the river of life is inhexhauſtible, that the glorious enjoyments of that bleſſed ſtate never fail, and that men ſhall ever live to enjoy them.

O Eternal, eternal! that word ſpeaks Seas of comfort and aboundleſs glory; it fills us with wonder and aſtoniſhment, it is that which we cannot comprehend, and therefore fit to be the ſupream happineſs. Eternal life is all the World, and more than ten thouſand Worlds in one word. It is higher than the Heavens, greater than the Univerſe, it is all things. It is the flower of Joy, the quinteſſence of Comfort, the pinnacle of Glory, the Crown of Bleſſedneſs, the very Soul and ſpirit of Heaven. It is all miracle, all exſtaſie, all that we can wiſh, all that we can receive, all that God can give; nay, all that he himſelf can enjoy.

But the wonder riſes higher yet, if we conſider who it is that is made the ſubject of this bleſſed Eternity. If it had been ſome glorious Angelical Being, Who was by nature removed from all matter, out of the reach of bodily contagion or infirmity; a pure bright ſhining intellect: or if it had been man that had never faln from Paradiſe, that had contracted no ſickneſs and infirmity, no diſorder of paſſions, nor violence of humours, nor other preſage of mortality; or eſpecially, if it had been a man that had never voluntarily ſinned againſt his Maker but ſuch an one as by prudent management and

and ſubjugation of his Body under all the difficulties he is thereby expoſed to, had merited ſome extraordinary favour at God's hand; if, I ſay, any of theſe had been the caſe, eternal life had been leſs admirable.

But that man cloathed with a Body, clogged with fleſh, that faln and degenerate man, nay, ſickly, infirm man, a meer bundle of a thouſand Diſeaſes, the triumph of Death, and the Priſoner of the Grave, that he ſhould become the ſubject of Eternity, and be placed in a condition out of the reach of Fate, beyond the ſphere of Chance and contingency, above mortality, where no time ſhall wear him away, no violence ſhall touch him, no ſtrife of principles ſhall gradually work his deſtruction.

When the Everlaſting Springs are dried up, that he ſhould have life in himſelf; when the Mountains ſhall be removed, the Earth aboliſhed, and the Heavens paſs away as a ſmoak, that he ſhould ſurvive all this and be freſh and vigorous to a thouſand Ages, and feel a perpetual motion, a conſtant circulation of the principles of life and joy in himſelf; this is the wonder of all wonders, and here we may cry out Ὦ βάθος, *O the height, and depth, and breadth of the power and goodneſs of God.*

Notwithſtanding all theſe multitudes of wonders, this ſhall be done; for beſides that the Divine Majeſty made the Soul of an immortal nature from the beginning, that it cannot periſh but by an act of his Omnipotency, he will be ſo far from deſtroying it violently, that he will everlaſtingly irradiate it by his own vital Spirit, and thereby perpetually improve that energy he firſt gave it; and then for the Body, that ſhall be ſublimed to ſuch a purity and perfection, that it ſhall admit of no corruptive fermentation, nothing ſhall weaken, weary

or diſorder it, but it ſhall be plainly indiſſoluble as the Soul it ſelf. This is the third ſtep of Heaven's glory; but there is a fourth yet behind which muſt not be forgotten. And that is,

4. The conſideration of the incomparably ſweet and bleſſed Society there to be enjoyed. When God had firſt made man, and placed him in the terreſtrial Paradiſe, where to the perfection of his nature he had furniſhed him alſo with all things of neceſſary uſe, or delightful entertainment, he conſidered yet *that it was not good for man to be alone*, and therefore provided a Companion for him; for in the midſt of all affluence of other things, ſolitude is moſt uncomfortable to humane nature, inſomuch that it is not to be doubted, but that any man in his right wits, would rather chuſe very mean and hard circumſtances in ſociety, than the moſt plentiful and moſt commodious, with ſeclusion from the Converſation of men like himſelf. For ſociety not only relieves men's impotency, and ſecures them againſt danger, but fortifies the ſpirits, and raiſes the parts of men, as we ſee by daily experience; and above all, it eaſes the burdens, and multiplies the joys of humane life: and touching this laſt, as the Earth is not ſo much warmed and inriched by the direct, as by the reflected beams of the Sun, ſo we find by experience that there is no happy accident or ſucceſs equally refreſhes us in its direct contingency, as when we perceive it in the rebound or ſally, and find other men (eſpecially our Friends) take notice of it, and reflect it upon us: And for this reaſon it is, that though the World be full enough of men, yet men (not content with that common alliance) enter beſides into more ſtrict confederations, which we call Friendſhips, (which are therefore not unfitly called

led by ſome body *ſal ſocietatis, infirmitatis præſidium & vitæ humanæ portus,)* as if life was not only an unſafe but an inſipid and flat thing without Friendſhip.

And this is not only ſo amongſt men, but ſomething of it is diſcoverable even amongſt thoſe higher and more noble Beings the Angels themſelves, touching whom though ſome have been too phantaſtical and *boldly intruded into things they underſtand not*, peremptorily defining their diſtinct Orders and Colleges, yet it's plain enough that God placed not them in ſolitude, but made ſeveral Orders and Societies of them, and accordingly they find delight in one another, not only in the mutual aſſiſtance they give each other in the diſcharge of their Miniſteries here below, but in joyning together in bleſſed Quires above, to admire and praiſe their ever glorious Creator. And perhaps it is not impertinent to add this alſo, that even the Divine Majeſty it ſelf, who by reaſon of his infinite perfections is *ſeipſo contentus*, and can have no need of any thing without or beſides himſelf; yet when we ſay (and that truly) of him, that he made all things for himſelf, and his own glory, the meaning is, that he takes delight in the reflection of his own Image, and feels his own perfections reverberated upon him from his Creatures.

But there is no neceſſity we ſhould go ſo far, ſince all I am concerned in at preſent is ſufficiently manifeſt; namely, that the happineſs of men in the Kingdom of Heaven could not be compleat and full without the advantage of that bleſſed Society which there they ſhall enjoy, and that added to the forementioned ingredients, raiſes it to the higheſt pitch of felicity that we can apprehend or imagine.

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For in the firſt place, there we ſhall enjoy the glorious preſence of the Divine Majeſty, without conſternation or affrightment; whilſt Men are in this World, it is not only impoſſible for weak Eyes to behold ſo bright a glory, but every approach of him ſtrikes them with terrour. When God had appeared to *Jacob* in a Viſion only, it filled him with great apprehenſions of ſo auguſt a Majeſty, and he breaks out, Gen. 28. 17. *How dreadful is this place*, &c. And the Prophet *Iſaiah*, when he ſaw a ſtately ſcene of the Divine Glory, cries out, *Woe is me, I am undone, for mine eyes have ſeen the King the Lord of Hoſts:* Iſa. 6. 5. For beſides that the very glory of ſuch diſplays of the Divinity, were wont to be very wonderful and ſurprizing, the conſideration alſo of what Men had deſerved at God's hands, and the reflection upon their own miſcarriages, made all ſuch appearances very formidable and ſuſpicious to them. But now in Heaven we ſhall *ſee him and live*; he will not oppreſs us with his Majeſty, nor confound us with his Glory; there ſhall be no guilt to affright us, nor object to amaze us; he will either fortifie and ſharpen our ſight, or ſubmit himſelf to our capacity, and ſhine out in all ſweetneſs, delight and complacency towards us.

Now this muſt needs afford unſpeakable felicity, for in enjoying him we enjoy all things; foraſmuch as all that is any where good and delectable, did flow from him, and is to be found in him, as in its ſource and original. All that can careſs our powers, that can raviſh our hearts, all that is good, all that is lovely and deſirable, are here in their greateſt perfection, and compendiouſly to be enjoyed. So the Pſalmiſt, Pſal. 16. 11. *In thy preſence*

*ſence there is fulneſs of joy, and at thy right there are pleaſures for evermore.*

Again, we ſhall there alſo enjoy the ſociety of the bleſſed *Jeſus*, we ſhall ſee him *as he is, and behold his glory*; and be with him for ever. What a raviſhment was it to the Diſciples, and what an exſtaſy did it put them into, when he appeared again to them after his Reſurrection? he had promiſed them he would do ſo, and they had reaſon to believe him; having ſeen the miracles he had wrought already, and the wonderful atteſtations to his divine power; notwithſtanding, when they ſaw with what malice the *Jews* perſecuted him, and with what ſucceſs, that they ſtigmatized his reputation, inſulted over his perſon, derided his doctrine, and put him to death, which he had now for ſome time lien under the power of; their hearts miſ-gave them, and they began now to miſtruſt they ſhould never ſee him again, *who they had hoped ſhould have redeemed Iſrael.* However, they reſolve to ſee what is become of him, and between hopes and fears they come to his Sepulchre on the third day, but with more of the latter than the former, as appears by the ſpices they brought with them to imbalm him; as if they reſolved his memorial ſhould be precious with them though they never ſaw him more. Thither being come they find the Watch diſmayed and fled, the Sepulchre open, the Grave-Cloaths laid in order, all which ſomewhat revived them; and beſides, they ſee an Angel ſtanding at the door, telling them that he was indeed riſen from the dead, this more incourages them: but when himſelf appears to them as they were going penſive into *Galilee*, and convinces them that

that it was indeed he, by entertaining them with the ſame diſcourſes he uſed to have with them, by eating with them, and by ſhewing to *Thomas* eſpecially his Hands and his Feet, and all the Characters of the ſame perſon:

Then what joy were they in! Lord how were they tranſported! how do they wonder at their own ſtupidity and incredulity hitherto, and admire their own felicity now! But when at the laſt day, after many hundred years interruption of his bodily appearance; nay, when thoſe good Men that *have not ſeen, but have believed*, that have lived to him, denied themſelves, been perſecuted, have died for him, ſhall ſee him in glory, ſhall behold that image of perfect goodneſs and lovelineſs, ſhall injoy him that died for them, that purchaſed them by his blood, that opened Heaven to them, ſhall hear him ſay, *Come ye bleſſed of my Father, receive a Kingdom prepared for you*, &c. "You who have "imitated me in holineſs, and followed me in my "ſufferings: you who have not been diſcouraged "by the meanneſs of my firſt appearance, nor the "long expectation of my ſecond coming; whoſe "love and reſolution for me was not baffled by the "contempt of the World, debauched by the ex"amples of men, nor abated by the pretended diffi"culty of my inſtitutions; you ſhall now ſee my glo"ry, be like me, rejoyce with me, live with me, and "never be ſeparated from me more. It is in vain for me to go about to expreſs the tranſcendency of this joy, which no tongue can utter, nor any Pen can deſcribe; we can think a great deal more than we can ſpeak, but we ſhall then feel what we cannot now conceive; when every face ſhall ſhine with chearfulneſs, every eye ſparkle with joy, every heart overflow

verflow with gladneſs, and every mouth be filled with Allelujah, and the whole Quire ſing together the *new ſong, the ſong of Moſes, and of the Lamb.*

But this is not all yet, for in Heaven holy men ſhall not only enjoy the preſence of their Lord, but the comfortable ſociety of all his train, the glorious Hoſt of Angels; theſe as they have condeſcended to miniſter to men in this World, and diligently to imploy themſelves for the protection of good men, and for the recovering of evil men to God, and for the raiſing them from the dead, and preſenting them before God in Heaven; ſo having now ſucceſsfully finiſhed all that miniſtry, ſhall now welcome them to glory; rejoyce with them, and entertain them in friendly and familiar converſation: thoſe great, and wiſe, and holy Spirits ſhall recount to them all the wonders of divine providence paſt, which they have been imployed in, diſcover to them all the ſecrets of the other World, and as Præcentors, go before and guide them in all the joys and triumphs of that bleſſed Kingdom.

And laſtly, holy men ſhall rejoyce in the happy ſociety of one another. Some men call the betaking themſelves to a Cloiſter or Monaſtery, by the name of forſaking the World, as if that was the greateſt inſtance of ſelf-denial and mortification; whereas in truth if things be well conſidered (eſpecially if that ſtate of retirement be ordered as it ſhould, and pretends to be,) it is ſo far from a ſeverity to ones ſelf, that it is the moſt effectually to conſult a Man's eaſe and comfort; it is to forſake the hurry, the trouble, vexation and care of the World, and to enjoy freely and without interruption the beſt thing this World hath, which is the company of perſons juſt like a man's ſelf, without the

the annoyance of different humours, qualities and intereſts; and doubtleſs were ſuch a thing to be hoped for in this World (which that ſort of men pretend) it were the moſt lovely and deſirable thing that can be here, that ſo many good and wiſe men who deſtine themſelves only to the ſtudy of vertue and knowledge, who are all of a mind, all in a like condition; who have no croſs or interfering intereſts amongſt them, ſhould enjoy one another conſtantly, under the ſame Roof, relieve one anothers neceſſities, improve one anothers parts, and comfort each others minds. Such a condition I ſay, were it any where to be found on this ſide Heaven, would tempt men to ſay with S. *Peter*, *Maſter, it is good for us to be here*, &c. But alas, whatever men talk or fanſie, there is no ſelect Company, but there is ſome weakneſs and folly amongſt them; there is no ſuch receſs, but emulation and paſſion finds entrance; no Wilderneſs without a Devil and temptation, nor any life whatſoever in this World, that is wholly free from care and vexation. Becauſe there is ſicklineſs and paſſion, divers humours of Body, and different conſtitutions of Mind, the underſtandings of men are of ſeveral ſtatures, their intereſt thwart one another; there will be peeviſhneſs and miſunderſtanding, whiſperings and jealouſie, Paſſion and Parties amongſt men while they are here.

*O præclarum diem cum ad illud divinum animorum concilium cœtúmque proficiſcar, & cum ex hâc turbâ & colluvione diſcedam, &c.* Cicer. de Senectute.

But in the Kingdom of Heaven there meet *the ſpirits only of juſt men made perfect*, holy men freed from miſunderſtanding, paſſion or imperfection; no annoyanceeither by the vicinage of the wicked, or the infirmities of the ſincerely vertuous.

All

All are of one mind, of one lip, one heart, no ſaying I am of *Paul*, I of *Cephas*, or I of *Chriſt*, for *Chriſt* is all, and in them all.

And what a felicity this is like to be we may partly gueſs by the deſtractions of the Church here below, for want of it, which are ſuch as that it's hard to ſay whether Religion ſuffer more, by its united Enemies, or by its divided Friends; and whether the uncharitableneſs of Chriſtians be not as lamentable, as the Perſecutions of *Pagans*. But there diſputes ſhall ceaſe, all heats be abated, all Controverſies umpired, and all having one end and intereſt, the only emulation ſhall be who ſhall embrace the other with the more ardent love, and more adore and magnifie the Divine Majeſty.

There ſhall be the glorious *Panegyris*, the Aſſembly and Church of the firſt-born, a Collection of all the good men that ever were from the foundation of the World; and Men ſhall come from the *Eaſt and the Weſt, and from the North and from the South, and ſit down with Abraham, Iſaac and Jacob, in the Kingdom of God.* Here ſhall be no private ſpirit, no narrow hide-bound mind that can love only their own Opinion, or Party, or Kindred, or Benefactors; but a generous Love, an univerſal good-will: thoſe ſhall imbrace that never ſaw each other before, becauſe the ſame image of God and goodneſs runs through the whole Society. "Who would not make one of "this Aſſembly? who would not get into this "Ark out of a troubleſome, froward, contentious "World, and there live in Love, in Joy, in Peace "to all Eternity?

Theſe

Theſe are ſome Cluſters of the Land of *Canaan*, this is a rude and imperfect draught of the New *Jeruſalem*; this (I ſay) is (according as I am able to ſet it forth) the entertainment which God gives his Children when they come home to him. And ſo much for the third and laſt part of the Parable.

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CHAP.

He was angry and would not goe in; therefore came his F

Ὁυκ ἵνα βάσκανον δείξῃ τὸν δίκαιον (ἴδιὸν τὸν λόγον ἔσχ
ὑπερβάλλοντα πλῆθον τῆς χρηστότητος τοῦ πατρός. S

his Father out & intreated him. S^t LUKE. 15. 28.

ν ἐσχημάτισεν ὁ Σωτὴρ) ἀλλ' ἵνα κηρύξῃ τὸν
ος. S^t Chrysost: περὶ Ασώτου. Page. 364.

## CHAP. VI.

# THE Father's Apology: OR, A VINDICATION OF THE Divine Goodneſs

In the aforeſaid Diſpenſation.

WE have now gone through all the three Parts of the Parable which we obſerved at our entrance upon it; and in the firſt of them under the type of a looſe and undutifull Son, we have ſeen the extravagant folly and madneſs of a courſe of ſin. In the Second, under the figure of the ſame Son, recovering his right mind, and returning to himſelf, and to his Father, we have had ſet before us a lively draught of true repentance. And in the laſt, by

the compaſſions and kindneſs of an earthly Parent, in receiving, bleſſing, and rejoycing in ſuch a Son upon his return, we have had ſome reſemblance of the unſpeakable mercies of God in pardoning, ſanctifying, and ſaving penitent ſinners. And now we are come to the Epilogue or Concluſion of the whole, which in the letter contains the Apology which the Father makes for this his indulgent proceedings with his Son, and in the myſtery and ſcope of it, a vindication of God's juſtice, wiſdom and goodneſs, in treating great ſinners upon their repentance with all thoſe demonſtrations of favour and bounty which we have lately diſcourſed of.

For (as we have noted in the entrance upon this Parable) the Scribes and Phariſees took great offence, both at the kind and obliging Converſation which our Saviour uſed towards Publicans and Sinners, and the incouragement he gave them (in his doctrine) to hope for pardon and reception with God upon their repentance; the latter of theſe was the immediate diſcharge of that gracious Embaſſy our Saviour came into the World upon; (*viz.*) to amend it, and to make reconciliation between God and Man, and the former was only a prudent Oeconomy of his to oblige their attention, and to gain opportunities of treating with Men in order to their reformation.

But thoſe ill-natured and ſelf-weening perſons who would ingroſs all God's favours to themſelves and their own Character, interpret this condeſcenſion of our Saviour to bad men, to be in derogation to thoſe that were good, and traduce the comfortableneſs of his Goſpel as an incouragement to looſeneſs. "For why (ſay they) ſhould "God

" God the King of glory be thought to debaſe
" himſelf ſo far as to ſend Embaſſadors to Re-
" bels; hath he more kindneſs for them than for
" his moſt dutiful Subjects? hath he (like *Da-*
" *vid)* ſuch ſoft indulgence towards a comely
" but diſobedient *Abſolom*, that he preferrs his
" ſafety before the whole Hoſt of his moſt loyal
" Servants? can it be that the Almighty ſhould
" (like ſome good-natured perſons) be ſo ready
" to forgive their Enemies, that they forget their
" Friends and themſelves too? what is there no
" difference between the good and the bad? no
" diſtinction? is Heaven prepared for the one as
" well as for the other? is he likely to be a Meſ-
" ſenger ſent from God, and to reform the
" World, that is found in Converſation, and
" maintaining Friendſhip with thoſe that are the
" ſcandal of it? or why doth he not preach Hell
" and Damnation to ſuch, rather than hopes and
" comfort? why doth he not proclaim the glori-
" ous privileges of good and holy Men, rather
" than pardon to the bad and vicious? at leaſt,
" why doth he not reprove debauchery and pro-
" phaneneſs, rather than expoſe Hypocriſie, and
" be always girding at the ſanctified party? We
" Scribes and Phariſees faſt and pray, and oblige
" our ſelves to a thouſand nice and difficult Ob-
" ſervances: We wear God's Livery, and call our
" ſelves by his name; inſomuch that all the
" World takes us for his Servants: But theſe
" Publicans and Sinners are meer Sons of *Belial*,
" have acknowledged no Lord, ſubmitted to no
" Yoke, but given themſelves up to their own
" will and pleaſure. And we have always main-
" tained the ſame tenour, kept up our profeſſion,

" and drawn the Eyes of all Men upon us for
" our zeal and accuracy in our Religion; but
" theſe Men with whom this pretended *Meſſias*
" is ſo familiar, and whom he ſo much incou-
" rages, if they are good, it is very lately come
" upon them, and the ſcars of their former life
" muſt needs reflect as much ſcandal upon his in-
" ſtitution, as their preſent Diſciplehip can do
" honour to his skill in their cure and reformati-
" on. What reaſon can there be that he ſhould
" be ſo fond of them, and ſo neglectfull of us?
" how can they have equal title to, or the ſame
" ſhares in the other World with our ſelves?
" ſuch equality is the greateſt inequality; ſuch a-
" rithmetical juſtice, would be the greateſt inju-
" ſtice, and argue God guilty of accepting perſons,
" which he declares againſt.

This is a true Copy of the thoughts of theſe ſelf-conceited *Jews* that murmured againſt our Saviour's Doctrine and Management, and this is the beſt that can be made of their pretences for ſo doing; To convince them of the weakneſs and abſurdity whereof our Saviour turns the Tables, and (as we have ſeen) having introduced a fooliſh, diſobedient, and vicious man, after a long courſe of wildneſs and extravagancy, coming at laſt to himſelf, and then returning to his Father, and his Duty, pardoned, and joyfully received by him.

This (ſaith our Saviour) is the image or likeneſs of the Caſe we diſpute about. But then ſuppoſe (ſaith he) this Father having another Son, who had not as the former, ever run into rebellion againſt him, and he ſhould now expoſtulate with his Father after this manner: *Lo*

*theſe*

*theſe many years do I ſerve thee, neither tranſgreſſed I at any time thy commandment: And yet thou never gaveſt me a Kid, that I might make merry with my friends: But as ſoon as this thy Son was come, which had devoured thy living with Harlots, thou haſt killed for him the fatted Calf.* q. d. " Sir, " I call your ſelf to witneſs the ſincerity and con- " ſtancy of my duty towards you; did I ever diſ- " pute your authority, boggle at your commands, " or expreſs a wearineſs of your ſervice? I never " to this day rebelled againſt you, as this your " younger Son hath done; who after he had " miſ-ſpent your ſubſtance by riot and debauches, " made himſelf a ſhame to your name and fami- " ly; and now reduced to extremity (having no " other way to betake himſelf to) is returned to " you, and received by you with ſuch demonſtra- " tions of unuſual joy and favour. Was I ever " he, that by any wilfull miſcarriage deſerved " your juſt diſpleaſure; or were you ever ſo kind " a Father to me, as to expreſs your reſentment " of my duty and diligence, by any ſuch inſtance " as you have made to him after an extraordi- " nary manner? Give me leave therefore to ſay, " I cannot but wonder at the different meaſures " you make uſe of towards him and me; if this " indeed be your act, and not rather the unli- " cenſed profuſion of your Steward and Servants, " for joy that they have now found a Son of " yours like themſelves, to countenance and in- " courage their exceſſes! Sure it is not all one " with you whether your Children be good or " bad, obedient or diſobedient. I cannot ſuſpect " it ſhould be with you as with common perſons, " who remember the laſt and freſheſt kindneſſes,

" but forget old and faithful ſervices; or who
" value their hopes above their experiences; nor
" can I think it becomes me to accuſe you of
" fondneſs and partiality, as the preſent face of
" things would give ſome colour for. It is true,
" your younger Son is returned, but he went a-
" way firſt; he is found, but I was never loſt. In
" ſhort, the preſent ſcene of jollity is of dange-
" rous example, apt to incourage looſeneſs, and
" diſcourage obedience; therefore I hope it hath
" not your allowance; or however, I cannot bear
" the reflection it makes upon my ſelf, and there-
" fore will bear no part in it.

And now (ſaith our Saviour) look what anſwer you would think the Father would make in this caſe to the diſcontents of his elder Son: and the ſame will both juſtifie God, and vindicate me in the point in hand. And I doubt not but you imagine the Father would reply thus, *Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine; but it was meet that we ſhould make merry and be glad; for this thy Brother was dead, and is alive again; was loſt, and is found.* And this anſwer will as well juſtifie God in his proceedings with the Sons of men againſt the murmurings of Scribes and Phariſees, as it will do an Earthly Parent in his dealings with his Children: for whether we conſider the literal, or the more recondite ſenſe of the words, we ſhall eaſily obſerve theſe three things to be contained in them.

1. *An aſſertion of prerogative, in that in both the caſes ſuppoſed, as well the Heavenly Father as the Earthly do but diſpoſe of their own*

2. *A*

2. *A declaration of juſtice in thoſe words*, All that I have is thine.

3. *A demonſtration of wiſdom*, It was meet that we ſhould make merry and be glad, *&c.* But theſe deſerve to be more fully explained.

Firſt then in the caſes formentioned, both the Earthly Parent, and eſpecially God Almighty, have juſt right to diſpoſe as they pleaſe. Μὴ τὰ σὰ ἀπήγαγον, κἀκείνῳ προσήγαγον· μί σε ἀπέδυσά, κἀκεῖνον ἐνέδυσα. οὐχὶ ἐκ τῶν ἐμῶν περγμάτων ἐχαρισάμην τὸ ἔλεος, &c. (ſaith S. *Chryſoſtom*) *I took nothing from thee* (my elder Son) *to give to my younger; I did not ſtrip one to adorn another; all was my own grace and favour.* There is a vaſt difference betwixt matters of ſtrict juſtice, and matters of bounty; or between merit and free gift. If an Earthly Parent ſhould deprive one Son of his right out of fondneſs or indulgence to the other, or ſhould give the firſt leſs than he deſerves, that he might give the Second more, this were apparent injuſtice; but ſo long as the one hath no wrong done him, though the other have more than is neceſſarily due to him, there is no cauſe of complaint. And ſo ſhould God do as the people of *Iſrael* charged him, *Ezek.* 18. that is, ſhould he make one man a ſufferer for another's ſin, and order it that *Whereas the Fathers have eaten ſour grapes, the Children's teeth ſhould be ſet on edge*; This he himſelf acknowledges would repreſent his ways unequal; or if he ſhould (as ſome have had the confidence to aſſert) by an horrible decree, prejudge a great part of mankind to eternal torments before they had done good or evil, or without reſpect to their carriage in

times to come, meerly for the demonſtration of his Sovereignty, or the inhanſing of his favour to others, whom he alike abſolutely decrees to ſave; this would notoriouſly blemiſh his juſtice: and therefore he neither can nor will ever do any ſuch thing. But now to reſolve to puniſh one leſs than another, when both have deſerved ill alike; or to give more and greater favours to one than to another, when both have deſerved equally well, is very agreeable to the Divine Majeſty, and that which we ſee inſtances of in common experience. For who ſhall ſay the reſt of the *Galileans* were not as bad as thoſe *Eighteen upon whom the Tower of Siloam fell, or thoſe other whoſe blood Pilate mingled with their ſacrifices?* Or who will be ſo uncharitable as to affirm, that every man whom we obſerve to be rich and proſperous in this World, is a better and more vertuous man, than he whoſe fortune is lower and leſs comfortable? In neither of theſe caſes any man is wronged, only ſome are favoured; and in the firſt of theſe two caſes God remits of his own right to puniſh, and in the latter he exerciſes his bounty and liberality. So our Saviour hath determined the caſe in the Goſpel, when thoſe that came early into the Vineyard expoſtulated, when they obſerved that thoſe which came in at the laſt hour fared as well as they, Matt. 20. 12. *Is thine eye evil, becauſe mine is good? ſhall I not do what I will with mine own? q. d.* Is it any wrong to you that another ſpeeds better than he deſerves? or muſt God not only give an account of his juſtice, but of his bounty too; And this will be as apparent if we ſuppoſe two perſons to have deſerved unequally, (that is to ſay) when one hath indeed deſerved better in the ſame kind

kind than another, but neither of them have been in any ſort proportionable to the reward which is beſtowed, for then it is plain that there can be no wrong becauſe there is no merit properly ſo called.

And this is the very caſe in hand, ſuppoſe a very holy man that hath conſtantly perſevered in a courſe of the ſtricteſt vertue, if now another man that becomes vertuous at laſt be admitted into the Kingdom of Heaven as well as he, there can be no ground of murmuring becauſe Heaven is no man's due, no man deſerves it but in the words of our Saviour, S. Luke. 17. 10. *When we have done all that we can, we muſt ſay, We are unprofitable ſervants, and have only done what was our duty to do.* In ſhort, the great bleſſings of the Goſpel (which we not long ſince ſpoke of) namely, the gift of the Holy Ghoſt, the Reſurrection of the Body, and the Glories of the Kingdom of Heaven, are all the effects of meer and unſpeakable Grace, to which no man hath any Right antecedent to God's promiſe; and therefore ſince no man could have complained of God if he had not propounded them to us, no more than the poſterity of *Eſau* could challenge God that he promiſed not the Land of *Canaan* to them, as well as to the Offſpring of *Jacob*; conſequently leaſt of all can any man reaſonably think himſelf injured if God by Prerogative admit other men beſides himſelf into the participation thereof. Eſpecially if we conſider

2. In the ſecond place, that one man's enjoyment of thoſe glories is no abatement of another man's happineſs that partakes of them. For thus ſath the Father,

Father, *Son, all that I have is thine. q, d.* " I " am still able to reward thee, though I have been " thus liberal to thy Brother; I will be just to " thee though I have been thus kind to him. Καὶ σὲ τιμῶ διὰ τὴν ἀρετὴν, κἀκεῖνον ἐλεῶ διὰ τὴν καλλιστὴν ἐπιστροφήν· καὶ σὲ ποθῶ διὰ τὴν ζωὴν, κἀκεῖνον διὰ τὴν μεταβολὴν, &c. *I esteem thee for thy virtuous course, and have mercy on him for his wise recourse or return: I love thee for thy constant holy life, and him for his happy conclusion.* Thou shalt have never the less than I have promised, though he have more then he could expect.

S. Chrys. *ubi prius.*

Now although it be somewhat difficult to make this literally true in the narrow condition of humane affairs; for first it is very common for Parents to take off that love from one Child which they bestow immoderately upon another; and again if their affections were infinite, yet their fortunes are not; and a great liberality to one must make the other fare the worse: yet the mystical sense is very easy, for God is neither narrow-hearted nor strait-handed; he can imbrace infinite Souls, and reward innumerable observances: He neither despises one when he loves another, nor is disabled to requite an old Servant when he shews favour to a new Convert. He (like *Isaac*) hath more than one blessing, so that *Jacob* need not plot to supplant *Esau*, nor *Esau* despair because *Jacob* hath been first blessed. The Feast of good things God hath prepared is sufficient to accommodate all the Guests whether they come early or late; Heaven is wide enough to hold both the one and the other.

With this consideration our Saviour comforts his Disciples, Joh. 14.2. *In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you*

*you before. q. d.* I will not deceive you with vain hopes, Heaven is capacious enough to receive all you my Diſciples, and though I leave you for the preſent, there I will entertain you all; and if there be different degrees of glory, yet no Veſſel ſhall be empty; every Man ſhall be as full of happineſs as it is poſſible. Therefore there can be no cauſe of emulation, no room for diſcontent where there is no power or capacity unſatisfied. Beſides, (as I have ſhewed already) the ſociety in Heaven is a principal ingredient of the happineſs thereof, where bleſſed Spirits communicate with, delight in, exhilarate and raviſh each other: and therefore the more arrive at that ſtate, the more glorious is the appearance, the fuller is the harmony, and the more redoubled and multiplied are the reflections of joy and bleſſedneſs.

Envy is common in this World, where becauſe there is not enough for all, one man's exceſſive happineſs proves the diſappointment of the hopes of another; for the ſame Wheel that brings one Man up muſt caſt another down: And the Courts of Princes are full of Jealouſies, Rivalties and Emulations, becauſe the hearts of the greateſt Men are narrow, and cannot admit ſeveral Competitors in any eminent degree of ſincere affection. But where both theſe and all other cauſes of diſcontent are removed, that is, where the heart and good will of God, who conferrs this happineſs, is infinite; where the powers of thoſe that receive it are inlarged; where the objects to be enjoyed are unlimited and unmeaſurably great; and laſtly, where the duration is Eternal; no wrong is done to one man when another is happy as well as himſelf, nor can any complaint, murmur, or animoſity enter there.

3. But

3. But thirdly, if it appear that there was great reason why the Father should thus dispose, then his Apology is the more perfect, and the murmurs of the elder Brother utterly absurd. Now for this the Father adds, *It was meet that we should make merry and be glad, for this thy Brother was dead and is alive again*, &c. As if he had said, " Son, " though the Prerogative of a Father ought to " bear down the pretensions of a Son, and I might " without your leave dispose as I will of my own, " yet I have taken care of your interest as well as " of mine own authority, and have shewed you " that your Brothers gain shall not be your loss; " and now I will condescend further to you, and " shew you what equitable considerations there " were on the part of your Brother, which made " it becoming my wisdom to do as I have done.

" In the first place, when I saw in how sad and " pitiful a plight your poor Brother was, (who " was my own flesh and blood as well as your self) " and thereby collected what hardships he had " undergone, I should have forgotten my self as " well as him, and not have deserved the name of " Father, if seeing his contrition as well as his di- " stress, I had not had compassion on him. Τί εἶχον ποιῆσαι; ἠθονάμην μὴ ἐλεῆσαι τὸν ἐμὸν υἱὸν προσελδόντα μοι, σὺ κρίνον ὁ θυμούμενος· ἀλλ' οὐ πέφυκα φιλάνθρωπος ὤν, ἀπάνθρωπόν τι διαπράξαθαι, οὐ δύναμαι μὴ ἐλεῆσαι ὃν ἐγὼ ἐποίησα, &c. S. *Chrysostom*, *When* (saith the Father) *I saw my Son, observed his submission, and heard his humble address, what could I do less than I did? was it in my power not to pity my own Son? be thou judge that art angry at it. It was not in my nature to be cruel to him that proceeded from my own loins*, &c. " And by the favours which you " see

" ſee I have conferred upon him, I have not on-
" ly melted down all the hardneſs of his heart
" and aſſured him to my ſelf for the future againſt
" all relapſes, but alſo ſet open a door of hope to
" others of my family ( if ever ſuch a caſe ſhould
" happen again ) that they may have no invincible
" temptation to be obſtinate and incurable. And
" if perchance you may think that by this means
" I as well incourage others to rebel as to return,
" I tell you that I for my part had rather ( if it
" muſt be ſo ) that many ſhould preſume upon my
" goodneſs, than that one ſhould deſpair of mer-
" cy; ſince the latter would ſeem to periſh by my
" default, but the other only by their own folly.

" And again, when I conſidered how difficult
" a matter it is for any that are once intangled in
" a courſe of ſin to diſ-engage themſelves again,
" becauſe *rebellion is as the ſin of witchcraft*; and
" that to ſip of the Cup of meer liberty is intoxi-
" cating, and ſtirs up an unquenchable thirſt after
" more: that there are charms in debauchery,
" and the Lips of an whoriſh Woman are ſnares
" and bird-lime; when, I ſay, I conſider that a
" young Man who hath once caſt off the awe and
" reverence of his Father, and the reins of Go-
" vernment, is like the Raven out of the Ark, who
" though ſhe found not where to ſet her foot, but
" ſaw the face of all things full of horrour and
" deſolation, yet hovered to and fro, and returned
" not to the Ark again; and I have obſerved the
" way of riot and licentiouſneſs uſually to end
" in Death, and the very mouth of Hell: I was
" therefore not only ſeiſed with admiration, and
" tranſported with joy to ſee your Brother emerge
" out of all theſe difficulties; but I thought it fit

" to

" to ſet up a monument of ſo rare an accident,
" and to place ſome marks of favour upon him,
" that had with ſuch reſolution broke through
" and recovered.

" Moreover, (ſaith the Father) as this event
" was rare and extraordinary in it ſelf, ſo it will
" have a very happy influence upon the reputation
" of my Family and Government; for as inſuc-
" ceſsful rebellions in the concluſion tend to the
" greatning of the Prince or State, from whom the
" ſeceſſion was made, ſo this return of my Son will
" repair the honour of my diſcipline and manage-
" ment as much as his miſcarriage had aſperſed it.
" And laſtly, I have great reaſon to believe that
" he who hath made trial of all things, and knows
" ſo throughly both the miſeries that attend an ex-
" travagant courſe, and the good and comfort (as
" well as the burdens) of obedience, and hath by
" the ſeverity of the former been driven to return
" to the latter, will for ever after prove moſt du-
" tiful and governable. Wherefore upon the
" whole matter I think there is juſt grounds for
" my joy at my Son's return, and that you ſhould
" rejoyce alſo.

And now this Apology of the Father ſuggeſts to us theſe four things in juſtification of the Divine Wiſdom as well as his Goodneſs, in beſtowing all the unſpeakable favours (mentioned in the former Chapters) upon penitent ſinners.

1. *The great intereſts and happy influence of ſuch demonſtrations of kindneſs.*

2. *The extream difficulty, and conſequently the rarity of ſuch recoveries make it very well worth a memorial when any ſuch thing happens.* 3. *It*

3. *It is a vaſt honour to Religion, and demonſtrates both the efficacy of its methods, and the comfortableneſs and ſureneſs of its incouragements when ſuch perſons are reclaimed.*

*Laſtly, Such Perſons are commonly very eminent and remarkably uſual afterwards, and therefore are fit objects of the divine bounty.*

1. Firſt, Such demonſtrations of favour and kindneſs to penitent ſinners is greatly the intereſt of God's Family and Kingdom, in order both to the bringing men into it, and to the aſſuring their ſtation therein. For God (as we have ſaid heretofore) neither forcibly draws any into his ſervice, nor violently detains them in his Family, but leaves them to the exerciſe of their own liberty; *his people are a willing people*, and that obedience is not worthy of God that is not voluntary and chearful. Therefore it is neceſſary that he propound great and mighty motives and inducements, that ſo he may out-bid the Devil, and convince the minds of men that it is their intereſt as well as their duty, to forſake ſin, to turn to God, and to adhere to him.

The Founder of *Rome* that he might quickly furniſh it with Inhabitants, made it an *Aſylum* or Sanctuary to all that were in danger or diſtreſs, that ſo men finding that ſecurity, and thoſe advantages abroad which they could not expect at home, might make that their Country where they found beſt entertainment. Not unlike to this is the meaning of our Saviour in the Parable of the King which made a Marriage Feaſt for his Son, and having invited his Gueſts, but they refuſing, he Mat. 22. 2. Luke 14. 15.

he ſends his Servants into the High-ways and Hedges, commanding them to bring thoſe in which they found there, *that his houſe might be furniſhed with gueſts*; not doubting but partly the great neceſſity ſuch perſons were in, and partly the honour and happineſs of ſuch an entertainment would *compel them to come in.* Upon this account God propounds not only pardon of ſin, but all the forementioned ineſtimable benefits to repenting ſinners, as well as to thoſe *juſt men that need no repentance.*

And although it be certain, that God hath neither ſuch need of men's ſervice, as to oblige him to reſort to theſe great inducements; and it be alſo very true, that there are but a ſmall number of thoſe that make up the Quire in glory, who upon ſuch motives were converted from extream debauchery: yet ſuch is the graciouſneſs of the good Shepherd, that he *carries the loſt Sheep home on his Shoulders rejoycing*; and ſuch is the goodneſs of God, that he ſticks not at this price for the redemption of any one Soul. Beſides, it is to be conſidered, that as we noted from the Hiſtorian formerly, *Difficile eſt in tot humanis erroribus ſolâ innocentiâ vivere*, that though no good Subject will voluntarily tranſgreſs the laws of his Country, and fall into the diſpleaſure of the Prince, yet the moſt wary and inoffenſive perſon, that is moſt ſecure of his own integrity, would deſire to live under ſuch a government where there was room for mercy and pardon if he ſhould offend; and the beſt of men are ſo ſenſible of the power of temptation, and the ſlipperineſs of their ſtation (as well as conſcious of their own ſincerity) that they are marvellouſly comforted and incou-

raged

raged by this admirable grace and goodneſs of God to Sinners.

And whereas the fear of Hell might be thought ſufficient both to reclaim ſinners from their evil ways, and to preſerve good men from apoſtaſie, we ſhall find upon due conſideration, that fear, let it be of what object it will, is neither ſo laſting a principle, nor ſo potent and effective a motive as hope; for this laſt raiſes generoſity, inflames the mind, ſpirits all the powers, deſpiſes or glories in difficulty; and therefore all wiſe men imploy this Engine, (eſpecially in all great Enterprizes) and endeavour to make men's hopes greater than their fears, and ſo order the matter, that thoſe they employed may have a proſpect of ſo great a good by ſucceſs in their attempts, as ſhall outweigh all their apprehenſions of difficulty or danger in the atchievement. And this will be the more remarkable if we obſerve in that famous encounter of *David* with *Goliah* the Giant of *Gath*, that although there was doubtleſs ſome extraordinary impulſe upon *David*'s heart to undertake that buſineſs, yet the holy Text intimates that he liſtned to the diſcourſes of the people, and was inflamed by the general aſſurance was given him of a mighty and glorious reward to him that ſhould effect it. Since therefore the propoſition of great and glorious hopes is ſo neceſſary, not only to draw men off from the preſent allurements of ſin, and to diſſolve the charms of ſenſe which habituate ſinners are bound in; but alſo to comfort and incourage even good men themſelves, and to engage both the one and the other in a generous courſe of vertue: the

1 Sam. 17, 26, *&c.*

Divine Majesty considering he hath to do with men, and resolving to deal with them agreeably to their natures, thinks it as well becoming his wisdom as his goodness, not only to proclaim impunity to his rebels upon their submission, but to assure them of the highest favours and preferments in the Court of Heaven.

2. Secondly, the extream difficulty and consequently the wonderful rarity of examples of great sinners recovered to sincere Piety makes such happy accidents deserve to be solemnized with the greater joy and triumph. S. *Gregory Nazianzen* making an Oration in Commemoration of S. *Cyprian*, as well reports his flagitious Life before his Conversion to Christianity, as his admirable vertues and piety afterwards, and makes the former a shadow to heighten and set off the latter: For (saith he) Οὐ γὰρ οὕτω μέγα, τύπον ἀγαθοῦ διασώσασθαι ὡς τὸ καινοτομῆσαι, θεοσέβειαν τὸ μὲν γὰρ τῆς συνηθείας, τὸ δὲ τῆς εὐβουλίας, καὶ τὸ μὲν τῶν πολλοῖς ὑπαρχόντων, τοῦ δὲ ὀλίγα παραδείγματα. *It is nothing so great a matter to maintain the Character of a good man when a man hath once attained to it, as to begin a whole new course of Piety; for now the one is but to be like a man's self, and to pursue a custom or habit; but the other requires a vertuous choice, and a manly resolution able to bear down former habits, and therefore there are but few examples of the one, but many of the other.*

Greg. Naz. *Orat.* 18.

Indeed, it is an unspeakable advantage to be early ingaged in the ways of vertue, for then by reason of the easiness of doing good, which is consequent of custom, a man seems to be under Θεία μοῖρα, a divine fate, a peculiar predestination

on to happineſs; and therefore (if it be well conſidered) there is nothing in all a Man's whole life that he hath greater reaſon to thank God for, than that good providence of his which takes hold of our tender years, and forms them to a ſenſe of Religion: for hereby ſin is made dreadful to our Conſciences, and upon the matter Vertue is as eaſie as Vice, and the narrow way to Heaven as ready to our feet as the broad way of deſtruction. But on the other ſide, *Revocare gradus hic labor, hoc opus*; to reduce an old diſlocation is very painfull, to put off the old man, to change cuſtoms, to caſt out Satan out of his old poſſeſſion muſt be very difficult, and require a very brave and generous reſolution.

And although to omnipotent power all things are alike eaſy, yet foraſmuch as God not only ſpeaks after the manner of men, but alſo proceeds ordinarily by the Courſe of natural cauſes, and doth not ſuperſede their activity but aſſiſt them proportionably to their natures, it muſt needs (notwithſtanding the divine grace) be a very difficult thing to recover an old and deplorable ſinner, in whom all the powers of the mind are enfeebled, the ſenſe of Conſcience ſtupified, and the very *Syntereſis* and natural notions of the Soul are corrupted, and conſequently a through reformation of ſuch a perſon is like to life from the grave, and muſt needs draw after it, not only the Eyes and admiration of men, but alſo the vexation of Hell, and make the Devil rage as diſappointed of the prey he thought himſelf ſure of, but eſpecially muſt produce *joy in Heaven, and amongſt the Holy Angels.*

It can indeed be no ſurprizal to Almighty God who fore-knows all things from the beginning, and is as far from admiration as from mutability of paſſions ( both which proceed from ſhortneſs of underſtanding ) nor to our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt* now in glory; for we ſee that whilſt he was upon Earth he knew when vertue proceeded from him to cure the Woman of her inveterate diſtemper. But whereas Men are wont to make ſome paſſionate expreſſions of their reſentment of every new and admirable event, God thinks fit alſo in ſuch an extraordinary recovery as this we are ſpeaking of to ſet up a Monument, Crowning him that overcomes the aforeſaid difficulties with immortal glory: inaſmuch as ſuch a vertue though it run a ſhorter race, yet by reaſon of the aforeſaid difficulties it encounters withall, equals if not exceeds that of the earlieſt ſetting out, and the longeſt courſe.

3. Thirdly, it pleaſeth God ſo plentifully to reward thoſe that come into his Vineyard at the laſt hour, and to make the condition of ſincere Converts equal to that of thoſe who continued always in his ſervice, becauſe the return of ſuch demonſtrates both the excellency of vertue, the great comforts of Religion, and the mighty efficacy of the methods of the Goſpel.

To begin with that firſt which we named laſt, what can be a more irrefragable proof of the power of the Goſpel, than to ſee Men who were given up to all debauchery, abandoned of all true reaſon, drowned in ſenſuality, careleſs of Eternity; in a word, *dead in treſpaſſes and ſins*, recover their right minds, and come to life again;

Doth

Doth not this evince that which the fooliſh World called fooliſhneſs, to be *the power of God to ſalvation?* Doth it not bear an illuſtrious teſtimony to that divine inſtitution in ſhewing ſuch effects of it as all Philoſophy and humane Rhetorick deſpaired of? To preſerve thoſe that are in health is valuable, but to recover the ſick, and eſpecially to raiſe the dead is admirable. To civilize ſome part of Mankind is all that humane wiſdom can pretend to; but to make Men ſubſtantially and compleatly vertuous, to alter Men's tempers, to correct their courſe, to reclaim the deſperate, to make lewd and profligate Wretches become grave, and ſober, and chaſt, and holy: this is a notable atchievement, and this is the pretence of the Goſpel, and ſuch Converts as we ſpeak of verify all its pretenſions. Is it not therefore agreeable to the divine wiſdom to caſt a glory upon that which glorifies the wiſdom of his invention?

And then for the other point, that by ſuch Converſions as we ſpeak of, the native excellency of Religion, and the ſolidity of the comforts of vertue, are demonſtrated to be above all the gaudy out-ſide and empty Pageantry of the World, or all the temptations to ſin whatſoever, is clear as the light, ſince theſe Men who have made experiment of both, forſake the one for the other; and having found the reaſonableneſs of its injunctions, the plainneſs and evenneſs of its path, and the certainty of its upſhot, the preſent comforts, and the future rewards, ſtick firmly and immoveably to vertue.

The Apoſtle S. *Peter*, *Ep.* 2. *Chap.* 2. *Verſ.* 20. tells us, that *if after a man hath eſcaped the pollutions of the world through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, he be again intangled therein, and overcome, the latter end of ſuch a man is worſe than the beginning*; *and that it had been better for him not to have known the way of righteouſneſs, than after he hath known it to turn from the holy commandment*, &c. And S. *Paul* complains of the *Galatians*, as if they ſeemed to be bewitched, *that having begun in the Spirit they would go about to end in the fleſh*, Gal. 3. 1, 3. For beſides that ſuch Apoſtacies render their ſecond recovery moſt deſperate, having eluded all the divine methods, they alſo ſadly aggravate their own guilt, *Trampling under foot the blood of the Covenant*; giving the lye to God, and belying their own Conſciences in going croſs to the convictions of their reaſon, and their experience of the comforts of Religion; in which doing they cannot ſeem other than inchanted or infatuated. On the other ſide, thoſe that having tried all the pleaſures of ſin and conſidered and caſt up all the gains of the Devil's ſervice, forſake him and ſeriouſly devote themſelves from thenceforth to God and his holy ways, utterly diſparage the Kingdom of *Satan*, and betray the ſecret weakneſs, the falſhood, the beggery and tyranny thereof. Namely, they declare that the Devil performs not what he promiſes, nor ſin what it pretends to; that all the allurements of eaſe, mirth, pleaſure, profit, which men were drawn to ſin by, were nothing but vain boaſts, all cheat and impoſture. And they confute all the ſcandals caſt upon Religion, all the calumnies againſt

against God, (as if he were an hard Master) and answer all the objections which men take up against his service, (as difficult or uncomfortable) as proceeding from meer cowardice and effeminacy of spirit. Wherefore since such men who heretofore like *Sampson* whilst their locks were shorn, and their Eyes put out, made sport for those Philistins the infernal spirits; now calling upon God, and collecting themselves in one great effort subvert the very pillars of that Kingdom; and by this last act, giving a more fatal blow to it than otherwise they could have done in all their lives, it seems good to God to Crown them as if they had always fought under his Banners, as well as assisted his conquest at the last.

Μεταβάλλουσαι γὰρ αἱ τοιοῦται (scil. ἑταῖραι) εἰς τὸ σῶφρον τῶν ἐπὶ τούτῳ σεμνυνομένων εἰσὶ βελτίους· Athenæus Deipnosoph. l. 13.

4. Lastly, Such men as have formerly lived flagitiously and wickedly, and are at last brought over effectually to hearty Piety and Devotion, prove commonly very eminent and remarkable for several vertues, to such a degree, as is scarcely attainable or imitable by any others. And therefore though they come in late, they are Crowned with the first. Namely, such persons are generally extraordinary humble and modest in their sense of themselves, they are very charitable and free from censoriousness and severe reflection upon others, they are exceeding watchful and cautious for the time to come, they have both a great compassion to the Souls of men of whom there is any hope of recovery, and they have a wonderful zeal of God's glory; which things together render them both very beautifull in the Eyes of God, and very usefull in the

World. They are very modeſt and humble, as reflecting upon their former miſcarriages, and being aſhamed of themſelves, their preſent attainments do not puff them up, by reaſon they *have a thorn in the fleſh*; a freſh and quick ſenſe of their former follies and diſobedience; they remember that when they were lately *in their blood, God ſaid to them, Live.* And this makes them not only moſt highly to admire and adore the riches of God's grace to them, that he ſnatcht them as a brand out of the fire; but alſo exceedingly contented with any condition of life his providence thinks fit to put them in. "Let thoſe (ſaith the Convert) "who never defiled "their Garments, ſtand upon their own juſtifica- "tion, and plead their own righteouſneſs; for "my part, *mine is but filthy rags*: If I had not "found a merciful God and a gracious Savi- "our, I had periſhed everlaſtingly. And if "there be any can think God a Debtor to them, "they may expoſtulate with him about his pro- "vidence; but I of all men have leaſt reaſon to "do it, who *am leſs than the leaſt of all his mer-* "*cies.* Now theſe things containing a full compliance with all God's deſigns, and being the moſt real advancement of his glory, muſt needs be very acceptable to him.

Again, in conſequence of this humble ſenſe of himſelf, the Convert is alſo the moſt charitable and favourable Judge of others, and the furtheſt from cenſoriouſneſs. There is nothing more unbecoming that modeſty which ſhould be in all men, than to be critical and curious in eſpying the failing of others; and nothing can be more arro-

arrogantly done towards God, than to take the judgment out of his hand, and place our ſelves in the Tribunal: nay, there is nothing more infeſts the peace of the World than this pragmatical humour of cenſoriouſneſs; but (ſaith the Convert) "*Let thoſe that are without ſin caſt the firſt ſtone* "*at others*; for my part I have enough to do at "home, and ſee more evil in my ſelf than in all "the World beſides: I have learnt of the Apo-"ſtle to *Speak evil of no man, conſidering that I* "*my ſelf was ſometime fooliſh, diſobedient, deceived,* "*ſerving divers luſts and pleaſures*, Tit. 3. 3. Thus he compoſes himſelf to be an example to the World of that temper, than which nothing is more conducent to better the eſtate of mankind; he will not rake in men's wounds, nor rip up their old ſores, but forgives as he hopes to be forgiven; he will not give ear to malicious whiſpers, which like *the arrow of the peſtilence flies in the dark*, and kills without noiſe: he will entertain no uncharitable ſurmiſes, but hopes the beſt; nor aggravate men's follies, but makes the moſt benign and candid interpretation that the caſe can bear; and thus not *judging others, he ſhall not be condemned of the Lord.* Nay further, the Convert is ſo far from all the aforeſaid inſtances of uncharitableneſs, that he is the moſt compaſſionate man in the World, both towards thoſe that are yet in a ſtate of ſin, and thoſe alſo who have ſtumbled and faln in their race of Vertue, and the moſt ready and officious to bring the former to an apprehenſion of his danger, and to reſtore the latter *in the ſpirit of meekneſs:* he knows the wretchedneſs of a ſinful condition; he hath felt the pangs of a guilty Conſcience; his heart trembles at the thoughts of Hell, and therefore his

his Soul is troubled for thoſe that are inſenſible of their own Caſe; his Bowels yern, his Eyes weep in ſecret, and his Heart bleeds for them; he counſels, perſuades, forewarns them, prays for them, and as the Prophet towards the Widows Son, he as it were *ſtretches himſelf upon their dead* Souls, and by the application of a lively example, indeavours to bring ſpiritual warmth and life into them. And now it cannot be imagined that ſuch affection to Souls ſhould be unrewarded by the great lover of Souls our *Lord Jeſus.*

Beſides, it is not to be doubted but the Convert who hath this Compaſſion to the Souls of others, will be infinitely cautious of indangering his own; he knows the Devil *continually goes about as a roaring Lion ſeeking whom he may devour*; he underſtands how many artifices and ſtratagems he hath to deceive Souls, and is ſenſible how full the World is of Charms and allurements; he is well aware of the Pit which he hath but lately eſcaped; and therefore is always watchful and ſollicitous of himſelf, careful to reſiſt beginnings, and cautious of all appearance of evil and in all theſe things his care and circumſpection ſurpaſſes that of thoſe happy Men who never foully miſcarried. "No (ſaith he) let thoſe "be ſecure that never knew what danger was but "in contemplation only; 'tis not for me to live "at eaſe, it was too much to hazard a Soul once, "God forbid I ſhould do it again; O my heart "akes at the very danger it hath eſcaped? me-"thinks I am not yet ſafe till I am in Heaven! "ſtand upon thy guard O my Soul! keep God "in thy Eye! truſt not thy ſelf a moment, but "in his and thy own keeping!

Laſtly,

Laſtly, (to add no more) ſuch a perſon hath conſtantly in his boſom a burning zeal of God's glory, which the conſideration of God's wonderfull mercy to him hath kindled in him. He therefore *loves much, becauſe much was forgiven him*; others that have not incurred ſuch dangers, nor been ſenſible of ſuch deliverances, cannot have ſuch raiſed affections as he hath. They do not *hunger and thirſt after righteouſneſs* as he doth, find not that ſavour and reliſh in the means of grace that he feels, perceive not thoſe obligations upon themſelves to redeem their time, and repair their former omiſſions by a double diligence in God's ſervice.

In conſideration of all theſe things together (to which ſeveral others might have been added of like nature) the *Jews* have a ſaying in their *Talmud That the moſt juſt and perfect men cannot be able to ſtand in judgment with the Penitents*; and a *Rabbine* of theirs Commenting upon that ſaying, adds further, *That no Creature, no not the very Angels themſelves that never ſinned, are able to compare with them.* But moſt aſſuredly (without *Hyperbole*) they are by all the qualifications fore-mentioned, prepared for veſſels of honour, fit objects of the divine favour, and ſhall be received with the joy and triumph of Angels, and all the Celeſtial Hoſt into thoſe glorious Manſions, whither *Chriſt Jeſus* the Friend of Penitent ſinners, and the Author of Eternal Salvation is gone before. To whom with the Father and the Holy Spirit be glory and adoration World without end. *Amen.*

*THE END.*

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